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THE DEADLY
HANDS OF
KUNG FU
JUNE, No 13

75¢

NO MAN CAN STAND AGAINST...

THE DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU

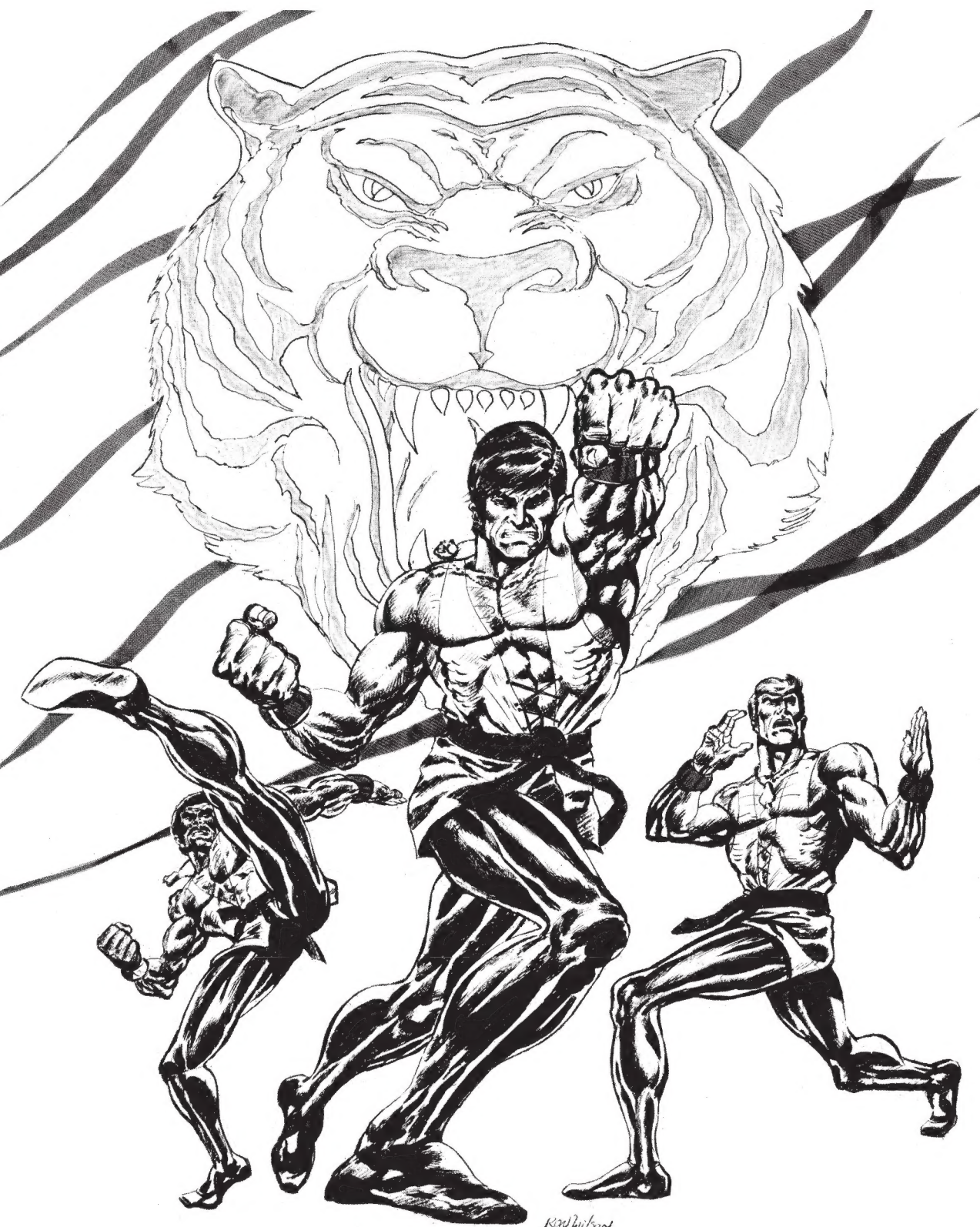


TOWERING ADVENTURE!
SHANG-CHI

MASTER OF THE MARTIAL ARTS!

PLUS PHOTO FEATURES ACTION STRIPS

MARVEL



Red Wilson

STAN LEE presents THE DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU™

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Circulation

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Editor Emeritus

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Cover

**MASTER OF KUNG FU:
THE DRAGON DIES AT MIDNIGHT!**
Shang-Chi faces the most perilous
death-trap ever in a tale of action
and intrigue by:

DOUG MOENCH & RUDY NEBRES

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LEGEND OF THE BLACK TIGER 26

An exclusive interview with martial arts master Ron Van Clief.

By JOHN WARNER & M. SKRENES.

KIAI — HOW IT BEGAN 34

A special behind the scenes peek at the making of an exciting paperback series as told by its creators.

By PIERS ANTHONY & ROBERTO FUENTES.

**SONS OF THE TIGER:
DEATH IS MY CO-STAR!**

A grim and bloody murder on the set
of his latest film plummets Bob
Diamond into deadly danger.

by BILL MANTLO, GEORGE PEREZ &
JACK ABEL

PAGE 43





Dear Deadly Hands,
I'm writing about DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU #8. The artwork was excellent except for one thing. At the end of "A Hatred For All Seasons!" Shang-Chi had his coat ripped off. After the man was killed that he was trying to help, Shang walked away after smashing the policeman's gun.

My point is, he walked away without any coat. Now, in your next issue, he'll probably have his coat back on. When does he get this one?

Another question: Why don't we hear more about Shang-Chi's mother? His father, Fu Manchu, is mentioned all the time. Hey, why don't you do a story where Shang-Chi meets a long-lost brother or sister? And make it exciting!

Billy Inman
Rt #5
Dunn, NC 28334

Whatever we decide to do in upcoming issue, there's one element you can count on and that is that it'll be exciting. While the idea of a long-lost brother or sister reminds us overmuch of a plot-line recently aired as a four-parter on the television series KUNG FU, we do find that you have brought up an interesting point. So we'll pass on to Devil-May-Care Doug Moench the idea that it might be beneficial in spirit and body to pay his respects to Shang Chi's mother and let us know what she has been doing for the past year or more.

By the way, what other magazine do you know that gets mail addressed to "Dear Deadly Hands?" Though the salutation may be strange, even weird, it is not the greeting that stirs our hearts but the content. As for the question concerning Shang-Chi's jacket, we assume that it wasn't long before he realized that he'd forgotten his garment back at the gym and returned for it. If that answer doesn't satisfy you, we'll just have to catch Shang the next time he's on his way to the tailor. (He has such a difficult time getting a perfect fit.)

Gentle persons:
To begin a reading of DEADLY HANDS #10, I must begin from the back; if I start the other way, I'll be speechless before the end, or ramble on and on and on . . .

First: SONS OF THE TIGER is fulfilling the potential Bill and George brought to it, and surpassing said potential. It has gone from being just another chop-chop film to existence as a cosmic, trippy series. Part

of this is due to Bill's careful, apt dialogue, and part to George's dynamic and personal art. Mostly, the praise must be laid at their feet together, since it is their joint care in plotting which has brought Lin, Abe, and Bob from cardboardhood to the growing adulthood and emotional maturity they are beginning to manifest. After its slipshod beginnings, SONS is demonstrating that all a series needs is creatures who care.

(To sidestep for a moment, Ron Wilson's inside cover was perhaps his best work yet, proving that the talent is there. Now if he'd only hone it . . .)

On to IRON FIST. WOOOOOWWWWWWWW!!!! (This is almost-speechless time.) This story was worth the six-month wait! Kraft's script was polished and generally well-written, but with pictures like those of Messrs. McLaughlin and (especially) Nebres, I wouldn't have cared if the captions were written in Pig-Latin. For the first time, Kraft and Nebres have brought my reaction to Iron Fist from mild distaste to near-adoration. I think Iron Fist is the solution to this magazine's problem: six months of Shang-Chi, six of Iron Fist, and twelve of the Tiger's Sons will do something to break up the boring routine, and give Shang a chance to breathe. And if Iron Fist will continue this well, I won't mind a bit.

I repeat: WOW. (There. Calmness prevails.) Wishing you much Shanging of your Chi, I leave you for two fortnights.

Roger Klose
2739 East 65th Street
Brooklyn, NY 11234

Courteous Correspondent:

All is quiet here within the temple, but the sound of your written word penetrates the deepest recesses of our spirits, even to the tiny dungeon nooks and crannies where the chroniclers of Iron Fist have hidden. While Dave has left the staff at Marvel to sojourn forth into the outside world, we feel that he would honor you with a humble "Thank-you." Rudy Nebres is still with us, which should be evident if you but glance at the Shang-Chi story in this issue.

Devil-May-Care Doug Moench claims that the "Golden Dragon" series (as he nicknames it) will run for six issues, at which time Iron Fist will return with an epic length saga of his own. And it might have to be as a permanent replacement since Doug claims that Shang is due to face one of the most fiendish death traps ever presented in comics.

We wonder if there's any truth to the rumor that

Doug has been keeping an eye on a certain mysterious and fabulously valuable black bird from the Malta Islands. In truth, we do not know for sure, although Doug has of recent walked about the temple muttering, "Yes, sweetheart," to whomever he comes in contact, much to the consternation of our new editorial leader, Archie Goodwin, who states that Doug does a terrible rendition of Humphrey Bogart.

Archie claims HIS is much better.

Dear Marvel,
I was looking forward to Iron Fist's magazine, but when I heard (or read, as the case may be) that his magazine was not even going to start because material was not good enough, I wondered. And after I read DEADLY HANDS #10's 34-page story which was the best Kung Fu story ever drawn and the best ever written, I wondered how this great story was not up to expectations at Marvel. I would like to see more of Iron Fist in DHKF and I hope he'll get his own monthly color comic.

The Sons of the Tiger is getting better and better each issue. Mantlo, Perez and Esposito have done a great job and should be praised.

Also how about a review of a couple of new Bruce Lee movies that have opened recently named "The Dragon Dies Hard" and "Son of the Dragon: Kato."

Kenneth Low
1494 Paulus
Memphis, TENN 38127

The Iron Fist story you read in DEADLY HANDS #10 was not quite the same story that was scheduled for IRON FIST #1 before that magazine was shelved. Two entire chapters were completely redrawn (and there were more than a few lines that were rewritten and worked into shape thanks to the talents of Mr. Kraft and Mr. Isabella, not to mention a certain Moenchkin. If we'd printed the original fiasco (we use the word inflammably) we're certain dojos all over the country would have screamed a war cry that was far less positive than the reactions you've read on this page.

The Sons of the Tiger are still with us, as you can



READERS' FORUM

Dear Marvel,

I'd like to express growing approval for the way Doug Moench has been handling the Shang-chi story line. Under his treatment, Fu Manchu has evolved from a one-dimensional stereotype of Yellow Peril evil to a deeper, more genuine individual. Shang-chi himself is experiencing wide American exposure, no longer limited to the tiresome battles of the early issues, always against his father's minions.

And in particular, I take exception to the comments of Brian Earl Brown, whose letter was printed in DEADLY HANDS #9. What he calls Englehart's "in-depth characterization" and "various subtle mind-states of Shang-chi," I call it rank sensationalizing of the latest Asian racial stereotype. The less Shang-chi walks with his head in the clouds and the more he acts like an ordinary, angry, sometimes clumsy human being, the better. AIIEEE!

William F. Wu
316 E. Madison #15
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104

Your points are well taken, Bill, although we feel you do Mr. Englehart an injustice. Steve's Shang-Chi may have been more esoteric, but he imbued the strip with a rich, fluid, poetic narrative that gave the strip a charm and direction of its own.

Your observation, though, is most astute, that stereotypes take on many forms; and the philosophical meanderings (fortune cookie style) that have permeated much of current fiction depicting those of Asian descent is well on its way to becoming one of the newest traditional roles. While Doug is slowly, but subtly changing Shang-Chi's character, as his development and exposure to American mores continue, he will still have roots in the lyricism of his past (much of which was in the sequestered walls of Fu Manchu's honan retreat). This does not negate the validity of Shang-Chi's earlier introspective and lyrical observations, they are an extension of them, applying those lessons to situations in the "real" world.

While "subtle mind-states" can become as much a cliché (through overuse or awkwardly handled, simplistic material) as "angry, sometimes clumsy human beings" (which could become much the same if the character's existence has only that one purpose), we look forward to future response from those of you out there.

Do you feel that some future historian will look back on today's fiction with much the same disapproving eye as has been cast at adventure stories from the 30's and 40's?

The Forum is yours, People, let's hear what you have to say.

see, and of recent they've been getting their share of the accolades. And now that the Silent One series has ended, we feel the Tiger Songs are just beginning to reach the potential that such a Martial Arts concept promised.

We hope you agree, Faithful One, and as for more on Mr. Bruce Lee, we have a special issue due very soon that will commemorate the second anniversary of his death. It is a tribute to an actor and Martial Artist whose influence is still felt in both areas, and we think you'll find it of particular interest.

Gentlemen:

I must protest. DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU is such an excellent idea for a magazine, that I hate to see it wasted on unrelated, or dull material. Specifically, I speak of the feature space given to Billy Jack and now James Bond. These films have very little to do with the martial arts; by your own admission, in the two pieces dealing with Billy Jack, there are barely fifteen minutes of karate action in both films put together. Both Billy Jack films have almost nothing to do with karate. I saw the James Bond film in December, and I have never seen a flabbier piece of entertainment. Its karate sequences were embarrassing and the pathetic Roger Moore couldn't perform karate if his life depended on it. I believe it is a measure of your imaginative bankruptcy that you are forced to include such dreary material in your magazine. Please kick these dull celluloid heroes out. If you can't find real karate masters to write about, create your own as you have so successfully done. You could interview Jim Kelly, or Chuck Norris as has been suggested.

I'm not crazy about the turn Shang Chi's stories have taken either. I like the adventures in the color comics, but these tedious little moral encounters are not worthy of Moench's high ability. And Mike

Vosburg doesn't seem to be able to depict karate action convincingly. What's the point in having a karate hero if he performs in the standard cartoon manner; i.e., he waves his fist and six villains go flying? Let's have some carefully choreographed sequences! I would love to see Neal Adams illustrate a whole adventure.

Yours.

Mike Baron
12 Ransom Rd. #17
Brighton, MA 02135

Gee, you don't want much, do you?

However, we must resoundingly disagree with your sentiments. Whether you liked or disliked THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN GUN or THE TRIAL OF BILLY JACK, you have to admit that they have their importance, in retrospect, to the treatment of martial arts in films, by both their merits and their failures. As we see it, this is a magazine dealing with martial arts entertainments. We branch out. We also try to include serious studies of the people involved in martial arts as well. To allow no latitude of flexibility in format would be to suffocate the magazine. We are NOT a technical journal of the martial arts to the degree of, say, BLACK BELT or KARATE ILLUSTRATED. Most of our technical articles are more introductory type of material. Even in the case of Frank McLaughlin's technique pieces, the person reading the article can only get the full worth of the article with the helpful guidance of a good sense.

Ah, but we're getting side-tracked. Suffice it to say that we'd hate to see the magazine limited on any single boundary and, even as you violently protest the Billy Jack and James Bond issues, others have been clamoring for such.

Also, let us know what you think of Rollickin' Rudy Nebres' rendition of Shang-Chi. And, as for the aforementioned Mr. Adams, will you settle for the captivating covers we've been tossing your way?

READERS' POLL

This is the moment when we reveal the TALLY of your votes (not the editors, not some select, mysterious unseen panel, but YOUR votes) for the best features of DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU #10. Obviously, there's not much debate this time around as to our humble champion Iron Fist takes first and second place with

- 1) "SLAY NOW, DIE LATER!" and "IRON AND STEEL!" by TONY ISABELLA, DAVE (THE DUDE) KRAFT, FRANK McLAUGHLIN and RUDY NEBRES, the two NEW chapters of Iron Fist's first black and white epic while—
- 2) "THE ORIGIN OF IRON FIST!" by DOUG MOENCH and DON PERLIN took a firm second place, knocking the Tiger Sons trio from the first place spot they had obtained in DEADLY HANDS #11.
- 3) "THOSE WHO DWELL WITHIN!" by BILL MANTO, GEORGE PEREZ and MIKE ESPOSITO bring the cosmic capers of our threesome against the nebulously nefarious Silent Ones up to its cacophonous conclusion.

Will the Tiger Sons regain their former glory? Only you can decide, August One, for it is your decision, cast upon the sacred scroll of the ballot, that will determine the truths that shall be written in the next Readers' Poll. So put down your chop sticks, swallow that mouthful of Sweet and Sour pork, remember that it is very difficult to eat Wonton soup without a spoon unless you lean very close to the bowl, and set your quill to parchment and inscribe your inscrutable list, from best to worst and everything that lies between those regions.

And when you finish such a missive, where do you send it? You send it right here at:

DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG-FU
Marvel Magazine Group
575 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10022

And go back to your Sweet and Sour Pork and Wonton Soup before it gets cold. Hang in there!

The Rising and Advancing of Two Spirits

Last month in this space, I did a new-editor-introduces-himself-and-says-hello column. This time around, I'll be saying good-bye. Not to you. We're stuck with each other, probably for a number of issues to come. No, the good-bye is for Associate Editor David Kraft, who is leaving us to take an editorial position with Seaboard Periodicals.

For sometime now, Dave was responsible for all article material in DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU, as well as our Contents and Letters Pages. Along with former editor Don McGregor and editor-in-chief Marv Wolfman, credit for the upgrading in content and quality of our articles rests with Dave. This issue's look behind the Jason Stryker paperback series by Piers Anthony and Roberto Fuentes was one of Dave's projects; many more will be gracing issues to come. If the book is a little bit nearer the top-level magazine we want DEADLY HANDS to be, considerable thanks go to Dave Kraft for it. We wish him all kinds of good luck in his new job.

So. We lose a champ like Dave—that leaves us definitely hurting in the Associate Editor department, right? Wrong. Because taking over that spot this issue is John Warner, a young man not at all short on credentials or capabilities. In fact, John has been on the scene with DEADLY HANDS ever since the first issue (he had an article of his own in that one), giving him a greater working familiarity with it than either Dave or myself. Masthead mavens will already be aware that

since issue #9, John's been Assistant Editor, during which time he was also riding herd on MONSTERS OF THE MOVIES as its East Coast Editor. After King Kong, Godzilla, and the like, our ninjas and martial arts masters hold no terror for Mr. Warner.

I also take a good deal of personal pleasure in being teamed with John. A few years back as editor at another comic company, I bought what was either John's first, or, at most, second professional script. He went on to become a regular contributor to the line of war books I was doing and one of the most promising among comics newcomers at the time. Now, I find the promising newcomer has become a seasoned pro; I'm expecting bigger and better things than when we worked together last time.

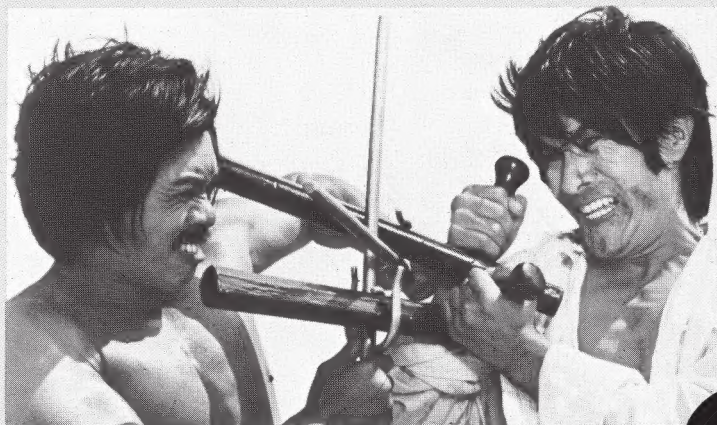
During that last time—by way of a slight footnote that does little to alter or illuminate the skein of greater human events but pads out a slow-moving editorial—John kept bugging me to do a series of stories

about a wandering Samurai involved in martial arts-type adventures and urging me to check out movies of a similar nature appearing at theaters in New York's Chinatown. I, of course, kept explaining to John that I was doing war comics, a serious business, and had no time to devote to such frivolities. Shortly thereafter, the Kung Fu show hit TV and FIVE FINGERS OF DEATH began breaking movie box office records. So much for editors as visionaries. And one more reason why I'm glad to be partners with John.

Finally, in the continuing chronicle of the virtues of John Warner, John comes into the office early. By the time I arrive, he's already set our Mr. Coffee automatic coffee maker in motion. And if you think that has very little to do with the quality of the magazine, you just haven't seen how lousy we do without that first cup of coffee.

Fortunately, you won't have to. The caffeine and adrenalin are flowing freely. I think we did our best for you this issue. I think we'll do even better next. Stick with us and see. And let us know what you think.

Thanks,
Archie Goodwin,
Editor



"THE GOLDEN DRAGON: ANCIENT
ICON OF BEAUTY, ART AND GREED..."



"THE LEGENDS SPEAKS OF IT IN
AWE, REVEALING AN INTEREST
ROOTED **SOLELY** IN GREED. THE
GOLD OF THE DRAGON, IT IS SAID,
IS **SOLID** BUT FOR ITS **HEART**...
...A **RUBY** IN THE SIZE OF A
MAN'S **FIST**."

"THE LEGENDS
ACCENTUATE
THE STATUE'S
VALUE BY DATING
IT'S ORIGIN TO THE
YUAN DYNASTY
OF **13TH CENTURY**
CHINA..."



"...WHERE IT WAS
PRESENTED TO THE
GREAT KHAN AS A
GIFT FROM THE
EUROPEAN EXPLORER
MARCO POLO."

"THE STATUE HAD BEEN **PRE-
SERVED**, AND EVENTUALLY
STORED IN A **PEKING MUSEUM**
UNDER THE SANCTION OF THE
PRESENT **COMMUNIST REGIME**..."



"...UNTIL **RECENTLY**, WHEN IT
WAS **STOLEN**... AND BROUGHT
TO THE **UNITED STATES**."

"AND NOW THERE ARE
OTHERS HERE IN
NEW YORK, WHO
WOULD STEAL THE
STATUE YET **AGAIN**..."



"AND **SECOND**,
AN ACTOR FROM
THE **TEMPLE OF
JADE THEATER**
IN NEW YORK'S
CHINATOWN... HE
WHO IS NAMED
KWAI."



"...OR SO IT IS BELIEVED BY THE
GIRL **SHAREEN**, SHE WHO
PROFESSES TO BE AN **AGENT**
OF THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT,
DISPATCHED TO **RECOVER**
THE STATUE..."



"...AND SHE
WHO HAS ASKED
ME TO **AID**
HER IN THIS
MISSION."

"I HAVE
AGREED."

"**FIRST**, THE MAN CALLED
CHO LEE, WHO POSES
AS A **THEATRICAL MAGICIAN**
OF ANCIENT CHINESE
MYSTICISM... AND WHO HAS
BEEN REVEALED AS THE
POSSIBLY **IMMORTAL NINJA**
KNOWN AS **"SHADOW"**
THIEF."

"**TOO**, THERE ARE
OTHERS -- AS
YET **UNKNOWN**
-- WHO WOULD
ALSO POSSESS
THE **PRECIOUS**
DRAGON..."



SHANG-CHI MASTER of KUNG FU



"MOONLIGHT GLANCES FROM THE BARREL OF KWA'S GUN. DOES IT KNOW IT WILL SOON FADE TO DARKNESS AGAINST A FAR GREATER FLASH?"



"I CROUCH TO FORM A SMALLER TARGET."

"NOW, SHANG-CHI... NOW WE SHALL SEE IF YOU MOVE WITH TRUE SPEED..."



"...SPEED ENOUGH TO OUTPACE A--"



"SHURIKEN--THE THROWING STAR OF A--"



"--NINJA."

"SHADOW THIEF--!!"

"NO, CHO LEE DOES NOT ATTACK ME..."

"INSTEAD, THE MAN WHO HAD SOUGHT MY DEATH EARLIER THIS NIGHT..."

"IT WOULD SEEM THAT CHO LEE HAS DECIDED TO RENEW OUR CONFLICT..."



* SEE LAST ISSUE. --ARCHIE



"...WOULD NOW ASSIST IN THE DEFENSE OF MY LIFE."

"KILL THEM--!!"

"CHO LEE PLAYS THE PART OF A NINJA SHADOW-THIEF WELL, GREETING OUR ATTACKERS WITH GREAT SKILL--"

"--AND UNNECESSARY DEATH."



"KILL THEM BOTH!!"

"URG-K-K--!!"



"I STOP THEM..."

"...AND PULL."

"NOW-- THE ONE BEHIND ME..."

"...AS A THIEF OF SHADOWS SLASHES A MAN OF FLESH."





"...THOUGH THERE IS LITTLE I
MAY NOW DO ABOUT IT.

"THE SPIRIT
HAS NOT
LEFT HIM..."

"...YET."

"HE FALLS AND DOES
NOTHING ELSE."

"IT IS OVER."



"K'WAI, OF COURSE, HAS LONG SINCE FLED... NO DOUBT TO AGAIN SEEK THE GOLDEN DRAGON IN THE FUTURE, AND IN THE COMPANY OF EVEN GREATER NUMBERS. BUT IT IS NOT K'WAI WHO NOW CONCERNS ME..."

CHO LEE!
WE WILL NEVER KNOW IF I WOULD HAVE SURVIVED THIS CONTEST WITHOUT YOUR AID...



BUT PERHAPS MY DEATH WOULD HAVE BEEN PREFERABLE TO YOUR ACTIONS OF THIS NIGHT! IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO SPILL BLOOD...

...WHEN ONE DEFENDS LIFE!



THUS, YOUR ACTIONS, CHO LEE ...HAVE RENDERED YOUR LIFE... UNWORTHY OF DEFENSE!

I WILL NOT FORGET THIS!

BUT CHO LEE--HE WHO WOULD CALL HIMSELF SHADOW-THIEF-- CONTINUES TO RETREAT INTO THE MYSTERY OF HIS NAMESAKE...



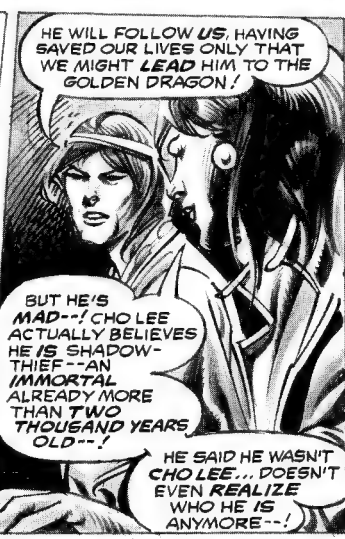
...AND WHEN ALL IS MYSTERY...

I AM NOT... CHO LEE!



COME, SHAREEN! WE WERE GOING TO YOUR HOTEL!

BUT AREN'T YOU GOING TO FOLLOW HIM--?



HE WILL FOLLOW US, HAVING SAVED OUR LIVES ONLY THAT WE MIGHT LEAD HIM TO THE GOLDEN DRAGON!

BUT HE'S MAD---! CHO LEE ACTUALLY BELIEVES HE IS SHADOW-THIEF--AN IMMORTAL ALREADY MORE THAN TWO THOUSAND YEARS OLD--!

HE SAID HE WASN'T CHO LEE... DOESN'T EVEN REALIZE WHO HE IS ANYMORE--!



SHADOW-THIEF MAY BE MAD, SHAREEN...



...BUT HE IS NOT... A LIAR...



...FOR CHO LEE HAS GONE ON TO DEATH!

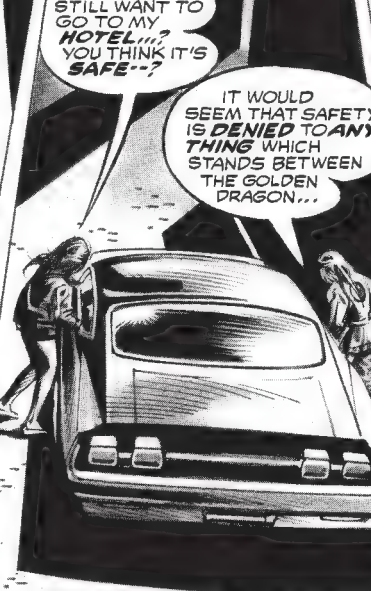


NO, SHANG-CHI--! IT'S NOT POSSIBLE! IF CHO LEE IS... IS UP THERE... THEN WHO WAS IN THE ALLEY--?!



SHADOW-THIEF!

COME! YOUR CAR WAITS AHEAD...



THEN YOU STILL WANT TO GO TO MY HOTEL...? YOU THINK IT'S SAFE--?

IT WOULD SEEM THAT SAFETY IS DENIED TO ANYTHING WHICH STANDS BETWEEN THE GOLDEN DRAGON...



...AND AN IMMORTAL!



THE NIGHT HAS GROWN DARKER WITH CLOUD...

-- SURE YOU WANT ME TO STAY HERE...?

"LIKE THE SYMBOL OF ETERNAL BALANCE -- YIN AND YANG -- MIDNIGHT IS BOTH LIGHT AND DARKNESS, GOOD AND EVIL... THE DEATH OF ONE DAY, AND BIRTH OF ANOTHER..."

"BUT THIS MIDNIGHT SEES A SHIFT OF THE BALANCE... AS THE DARK SEED IN THE CENTER OF LIGHT GROWS... AND DEVOURS THE BIRTH OF DAY WITH SPREADING DEATH."

YES! THE NUMBER OF YOUR ROOM...?

NINE-A... HERE IS THE KEY!

THE STATUE IS HIDDEN IN THE MATTRESS...

AND... BE CAREFUL, SHANG-CHI... PLEASE!

"SOFT SOUNDS..."

"AND NOW A LOUDER ONE..."

SA

KREESH



"I AM TOO LATE."

"...AND THE STATUE... STOLEN."

"THE WINDOW HAS BEEN SHATTERED..."

HURRY, SHANG-CHI -- HE'S GOT IT!

I SAW THE STATUE IN HIS HAND--!

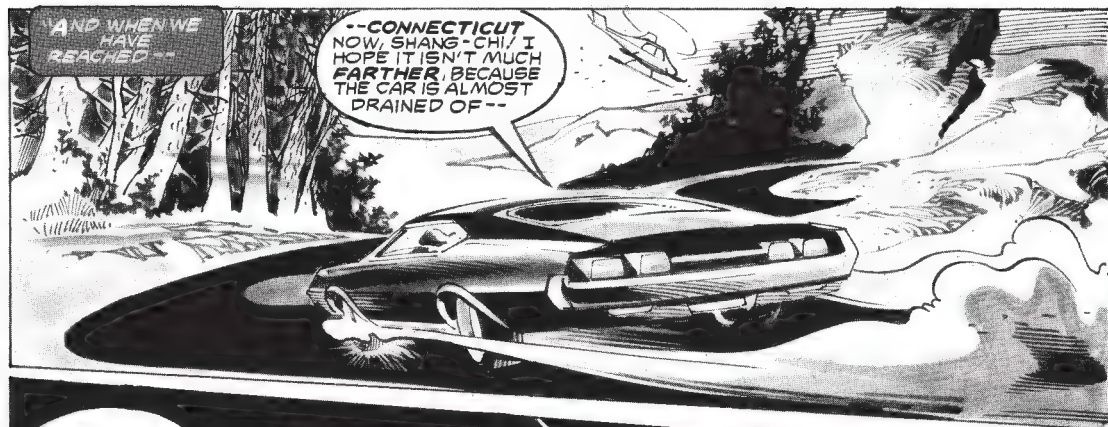
"I MUST REACH THE CAR..."

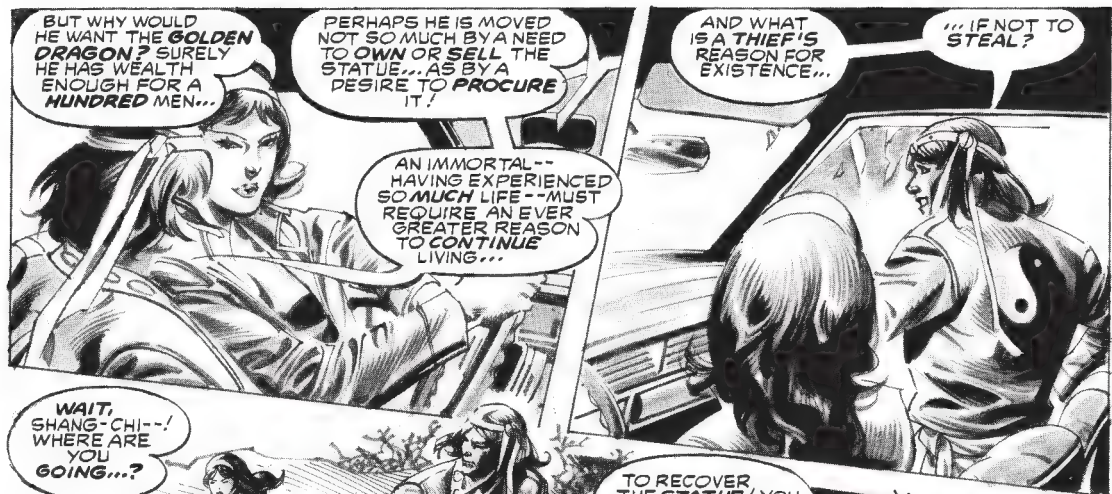
"...BUT THE ELEVATOR IS... TOO SLOW."

SHANG-CHI-- NO--OO--O!!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING--?!









...IS USELESS...

...STOPPING
NO ONE BUT
THOSE WHO
CANNOT POSE
A THREAT.

OR PERHAPS
THE FENCE
IS MEANT TO
BE GREETED
FROM ITS
OTHER SIDE...
BLOCKING
EXIT RATHER
THAN
ENTRANCE...

JOHNNY SAYS
HE GOT IT
TONIGHT!

MAYBE
WE'LL FINALLY
GET OUR CUT,
THEN!

IT IS A THOUGHT.

OR FIRED--FOR
NOT COMIN'
THROUGH AND
FORCIN' HIM TO--

SHRASHH

WHAT
THE--?!?

CHANG--!!
HURRY--!!

THERE ARE ONLY TWO.

ONE OF THEM
SCREAMS...



...BRIEFLY.

THE SKILL OF
YOUR LAST KICK
APPROACHED
PERFECTION...

SHADOW-THIEF
HAS TOLD ME OF
YOUR SKILL, AND
SPOKE IN TRUTH
WHEN HE PRO-
NOUNCED IT--

"BUT EFFECTIVELY."

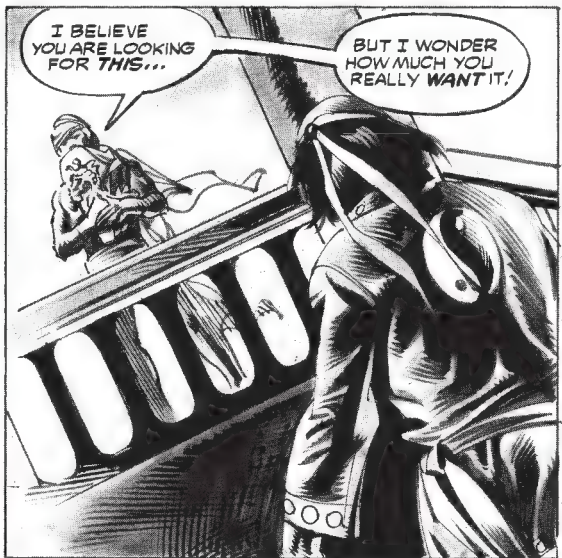
--INFERIOR TO
MINE--!!

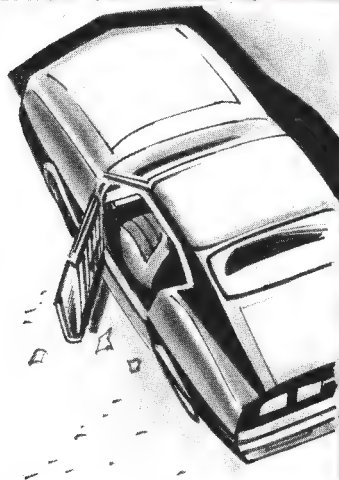
UHHN--!!

CAN IT BE THAT
SHADOW-THIEF
WAS MISTAKEN...?

I THINK
NOT--

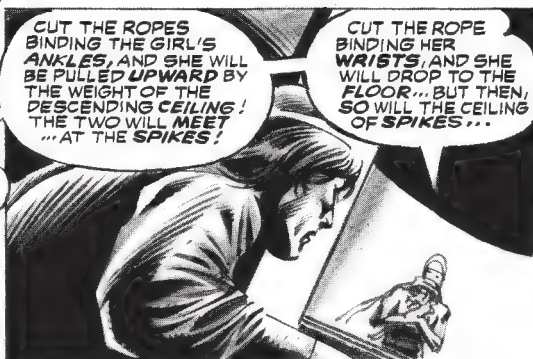
AGHHH--!!







BUT I WOULD NOT ADVISE CUTTING ANYTHING, SHANG-CHI...



CUT THE ROPES BINDING THE GIRL'S ANKLES, AND SHE WILL BE PULLED UPWARD BY THE WEIGHT OF THE DESCENDING CEILING! THE TWO WILL MEET... AT THE SPIKES!

CUT THE ROPE BINDING HER WRISTS, AND SHE WILL DROP TO THE FLOOR... BUT THEN, SO WILL THE CEILING OF SPIKES...

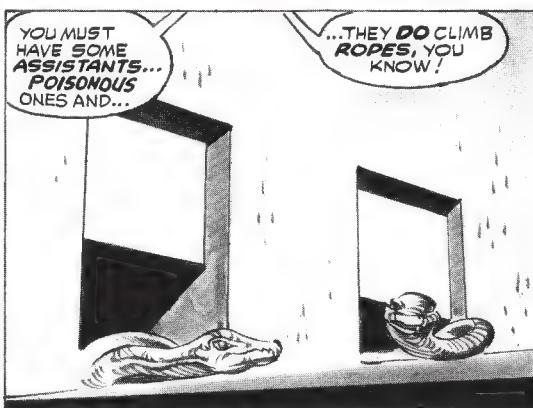


YOU SEE, SHE IS THE THREAD BINDING HER OWN LIFE! IF SHE IS TO LIVE, SHE MUST REMAIN WHERE SHE IS...

AND IF YOU ARE TO "RESCUE" HER, SHE MUST DIE!



BUT JUST TO MAKE THINGS MORE FAIR...



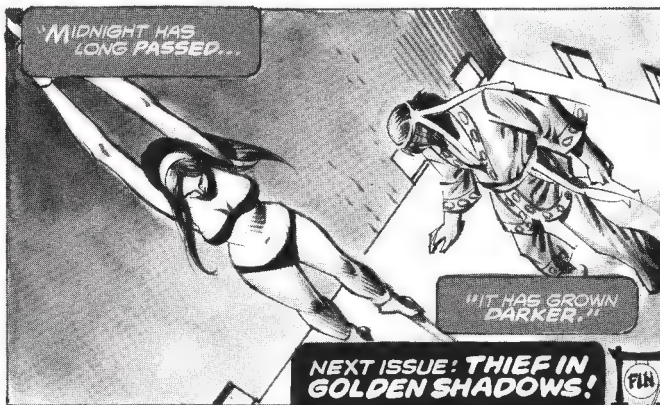
YOU MUST HAVE SOME ASSISTANTS... POISONOUS ONES AND...

...THEY DO CLIMB ROPES, YOU KNOW!



FAREWELL, SHANG-CHI...

FARE WELL...



"MIDNIGHT HAS LONG PASSED..."

"IT HAS GROWN DARKER."

NEXT ISSUE: THIEF IN GOLDEN SHADOWS!

FIN

LEGEND OF THE BLACK TIGER

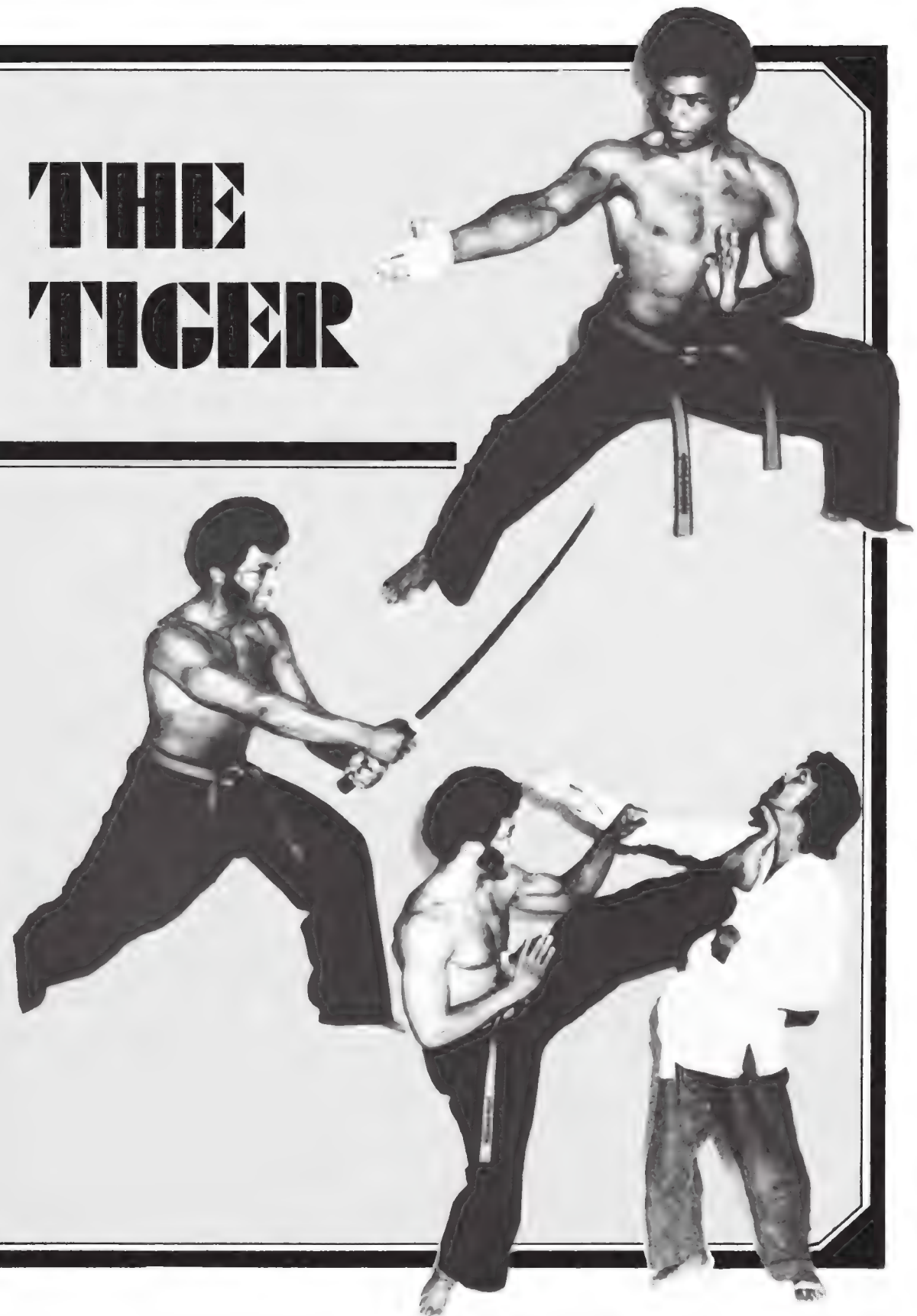
A candid interview with Ronald Van Clief; actor, stunt man, martial arts choreographer and Black Belt!

By M. Skrenes and John Warner

A curious note about martial arts films—no matter how good or how bad the product is, no matter how low a budget, the martial arts, key note of this genre, are mostly accurate. If it seems to you that We've stated the obvious, think again. All other genres seem at the mercy of their budget. A low budget will cause Science Fiction to hack the special effects and Horror to sacrifice mood. But whatever you may think of Kung Fu films as far as story or cinematography goes, you have to concede that the fighting is all there! This is largely due to the fact that these films are made by martial artists and, possibly, as theorized by Ron Van Clief, FOR martial artists!

Ron Van Clief is, among varied other things, a martial arts choreographer. He is the one who makes sure that the fighting is accurate and that it works! And, lest anyone doubt Ron's qualifications, in the considerably short span of fifteen years he has accumulated a resume that reads like a Who's Who (or a What's What, as the case may be) of martial arts including Kung Fu, Goju Karate, Jui-Jitsu, Tae Kwon Do and Tai Chi Chuan! But Ron's performance is not limited to the dojo, or even to the backside of a camera. He has done stunts in SHAFT, ACROSS 110TH STREET, and a large number of the black action films as well as having signed a four film starring contract with United International.

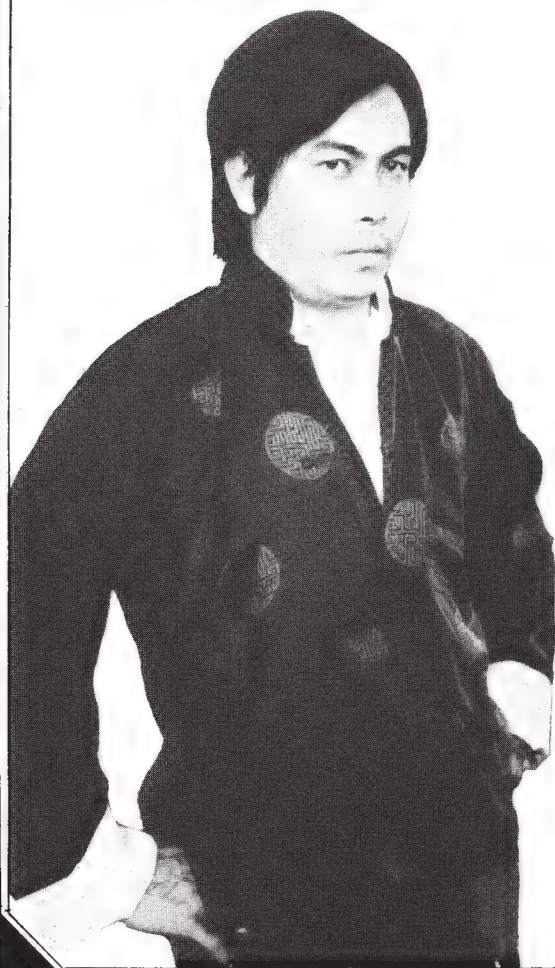
We didn't know exactly what to expect when we headed down to the upper East Village in Manhattan on



a coolish Wednesday evening for the interview. What we found was a soft-spoken, very hospitable individual with a warm, friendly manner, seeming a little tired from a very hectic schedule and having just recently returned from filming in Hong Kong. He had an air of confidence without excessive arrogance and generally a relaxing person to be around. The apartment was a bit disorganized without being chaotic from his having just moved in. Backed into a corner for want of a better place was an impressive armada of martial arts tournament trophies with a sea of weapons spread on the floor in front of them. The weapons included sai, Samurai and Kung Fu swords, shorts swords, a three part staff and much more. With this unintentional display as an introduction to Ron Van Clief the martial artist, we sat down and began our interview.

We'd like to extend our deep gratitude to Ron, who so generously took non-existent time out of a hectic schedule to grant us this interview and to Henry Scarpelli of Sotos Films, without whom this interview might never have happened to begin with.

And so the interview began . . .



DHOKF: Can we start off with the background stuff? The martial arts . . . how long have you been doing them and what forms are you into?

VANCLIEF: That's going to take quite a bit of time!

DHOKF: Well, shoot away! Did you start very young?

VANCLIEF: I started about 1959. Then I was in the Marine Corps. I was over in Okinawa, Japan, Hong Kong and a lot of other places. I spent forty-seven months there. When I went over I was a black belt already—I had studied Jui-Jitsu with Moses Powell in Brooklyn. I continued my studies in goju and Okinawa te, which are two forms of Okinawan karate. In Hong Kong I got the basis of Wing Chen kung fu. I came back to the United States and studied the Nisei Goju system for seven years with Frank Ruiz, then I went to his instructor, Peter Urban. Peter Urban is a tenth degree red belt master and founder of the USA goju system. I competed in tournaments for twelve years and won the United States championship four times.

DHOKF: How did you first get into stunt work?

VANCLIEF: In 1971 I was introduced to Alex Stevenson, the president of the East Coast Stuntman's Association. I met him through Harry Mattson, a karate practitioner and one of my students. As a matter of fact, both of them are black belts in Goju Karate.

DHOKF: How many films have you done stunt work in?

VANCLIEF: About thirty.

DHOKF: What kind of stunts do you usually do?

VANCLIEF: I coordinate fighting sequences, stunts, car wrecks . . .

DHOKF: Does that mean you don't take falls anymore?

VANCLIEF: Everthing! I take every stunt available!

DHOKF: You've probably had your share of close calls . . . ?

VANCLIEF: Well, yes, of course. There was one car accident sequence—a chase. The car turned over and I broke my leg. I did another job where I jumped from a plane and the chute, a streamer, didn't open properly. At two hundred feet per second (internal velocity), you can only go about a minute. But the chute finally opened.

DHOKF: Do you think that people who are trained in the martial arts are particularly suited to stunt work?

VANCLIEF: That changes with the individual. A lot of people will never be able to do that type of thing. But martial arts training develops the mind and the body so you get better coordination.

DHOKF: Backtracking just a bit, you didn't say what exactly made you want to go into martial arts.

VANCLIEF: I had seen a demonstration by Peter Urbans, who is my instructor now and has been for fifteen years. I was amazed that a person could ply their body in so many different positions with such form and fluidity. I was a gymnast already, so I was in shape. It is much easier to develop that form if you are already in condition.

DHOKF: What was your specialty in gymnastics?

VANCLIEF: High bar— but also horse, uneven bars and balance beam.

DHOKF: You just returned from the Philippines where you were starring in a feature being made by a Hong

Kong film company. How did it come about?

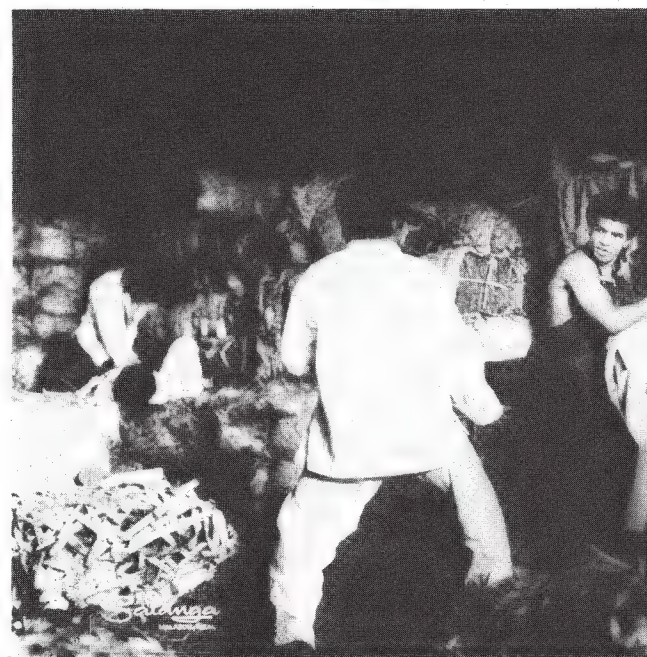
VANCLIEF: United International did a joint venture with the Yangtse Film Production Company of Hong Kong, which is the second largest film company there, and Joseph Estrada productions of the Philippines. We got together and we did the film which is called "THUNDER BLOW!" It was directed by Tommy Lee Chun, a very good Chinese actor. This is maybe the third or fourth film directing. He's an excellent director and a master martial artist! That's very important in making a martial arts movie. I did the martial arts choreography and starred. I was in the Philippines for eight weeks shooting.

DHOKF: Can you give us an idea of what the film is about?

VANCLIEF: It deals with a young man who comes from the northern provinces of China to work in the city and gets involved in waterfront organized crime. He signs a contract that says he has to work for them for five years. He is illiterate (but a master martial artist). Of course, he can't break his contract. I am working with the government, organizing the workers to form a union, so I come to his aid. I'm involved in about ten fighting sequences. Jason Piao plays the young man. His girlfriend is raped and kills herself— from that point the film becomes a revenge trip. For the last sequence they hired one hundred and fifty stunt men who go against Jason, myself and George Astraga, who is the top actor in the Philippines.

DHOKF: What kind of safety checks do you have for the stunts over there?

VANCLIEF: Very few! Some of the trampolines that they work on look like they were around during the civil war.



DHOKF: If you get hurt, what kind of medical facilities do you have?

VANCLIEF: You take care of your own medical. This was non-SAG (Screen Actors Guild).

DHOKF: But how did you get the part and what was it like once you were over there?

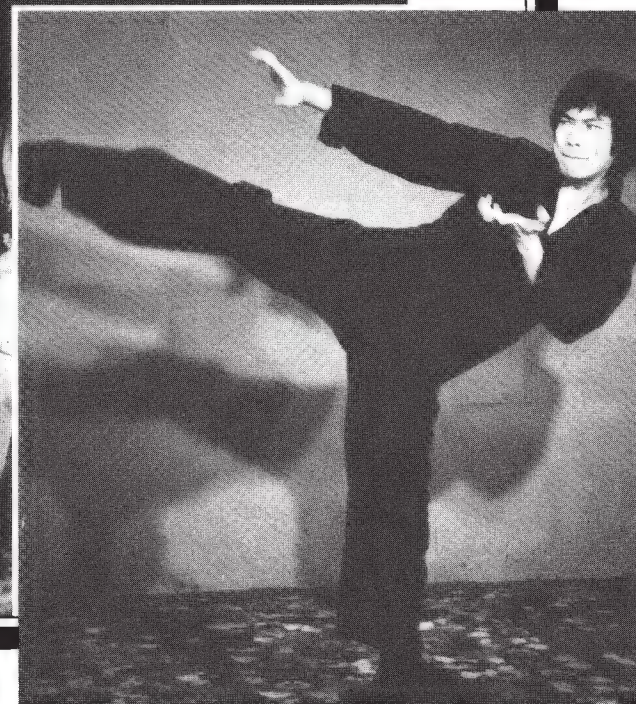
VANCLIEF: I was represented by Black Beauty Modeling Agency. They got me the offer from the President of United International films. I auditioned, of course, and met the producer, Yo Ban Yee, who is the President of the Yangtse Film Corporation. I demonstrated martial arts and acting ability and a month later I was gone! It was a long plane ride—fifteen hours. The Philippines were fine. The weather was nice and the living conditions were good. I rented a house while I was there in order to spend some time away from everything. While there I also trained at some twenty different martial arts schools as well as opening my own school and teaching. My only complaint about the working conditions is that sometimes the hours were too long. They don't have a Screen Actors Guild. They can work fourteen, sixteen hours . . . Saturday, Sunday, whatever. And they did just exactly that! The Chinese are very professional to work with. I worked alongside Jason Piao, which was a great pleasure. He's a fantastic martial artist. They brought fifteen people with him from Hong Kong to the Philippines, the cameraman, the director . . .

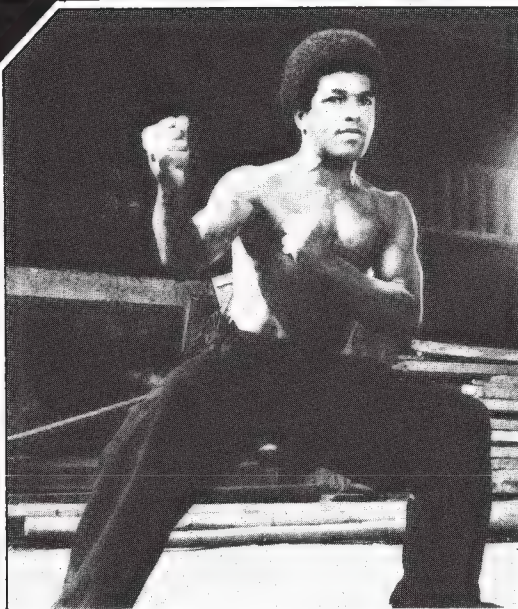
DHOKF: Was the whole film shot in the Philippines?

VANCLIEF: Yes, but the editing was done in Hong Kong.

DHOKF: Was it mostly studio filming, or was there outdoor work?

VANCLIEF: Mostly outdoors. Some in Manila, Markina, Botangas and other provinces. We shot a few





sequences inside the Markina Camera Gardens— they have it landscaped with even a natural volcano!

DHOKF: Why did they go all the way to the Philippines?

VANCLIEF: You know, it's very inexpensive to shoot a film there.

DHOKF: Even after defraying the cost of shipping all the actors, cameramen and equipment?

VANCLIEF: Sure. They pay the stuntmen in Pesos. It's 6.60 (6 pesos, 60 centavos) to the dollar. The wage law there is, I think, eight pesos a day. That's like a dollar and a quarter a day. While I was there I made arrangements to start my own production. I wrote a screenplay called **LEGEND OF THE BLACK TIGER**, which I'm directing soon.

DHOKF: Do you happen to speak Chinese?

VANCLIEF: I speak some Cantonese. Sometimes there were communication problems, but the crew spoke English.

DHOKF: What did you do during your free time?

VANCLIEF: Training and seeing the Philippines. I had been there in 1963 and I enjoyed revisiting it.

DHOKF: You were teaching martial arts to kids while you were there, weren't you?

VANCLIEF: Yes. The martial arts are very popular in the Philippines. They have a park there called New Metta Park where they have maybe eight to ten thousand people every morning, all practicing. It's fantastic to look at. I took a lot of pictures there.

DHOKF: We've been informed that you'll be leaving shortly for Rome to star in another film. What can you tell us about it?

VANCLIEF: I don't know when it will be released, but the production begins about May 15th. I don't even know the working title yet. This is with the same company,

United International. I signed a contract to do four films with them— this one in Rome is the second in the series.

DHOKF: Is it a martial arts film also?

VANCLIEF: Yes.

DHOKF: What are your plans for the future?

VANCLIEF: What I plan to do eventually is direct my own films. Within the martial arts structure, I have eighteen schools now and I want to franchise my name, go public and eventually international! I also want to start a black belt college where I can just teach black belts all the martial arts. They could have a much more diversified curriculum.

DHOKF: Tell us more about the system you developed.

VANCLIEF: In 1971 Owen Watson, a fifth degree black belt, and myself started the Chinese Goju Karate Organization. This is an organization that incorporates many different martial arts. During my sixteen years of experience, I found that many techniques taught, although traditional, were not practical for now. The martial arts were created for a much smaller people. The structural differences change the application of the techniques. So I decided to change the martial arts structure somewhat so that it would evolve with the times.

DHOKF: This Goju —soft-hard technique— does this mean strength moves combined with Kung Fu moves or...

VANCLIEF: The karate definition would be block soft and hit hard. Above that, it also has a mental aspect where soft (flexible) thinking will give you better power than hard (rigid) thinking. There are some forms of martial arts that do involve strength, but there are others like aikido, jui-jitsu, that don't require such high energy output.

DHOKF: How old are you now?

VANCLIEF: Thirty-one.

DHOKF: That's inspiring!

VANCLIEF: Why?

DHOKF: Because you've ALREADY got a lot of things set up for yourself. You have quite a few screen credits for stunt work and choreography, you have three more films in the offing, you want to direct your own films and you have several martial arts schools. Anything else?

VANCLIEF: I've written two books.

DHOKF: What books?

VANCLIEF: "THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SELF DEFENSE" is one. The photography is being done for my third book called "PSYCHOLOGY OF THE MARTIAL ARTIST."

DHOKF: Before you got into martial arts you were involved in gymnastics. What other things, interests, headed you in this direction?

VANCLIEF: Well, I was always interested in Eastern philosophy and traditions. I studied them some while I was at Columbia University. I am a Buddhist, by the way.

DHOKF: Japanese or Chinese Buddhism?

VANCLIEF: Chinese. I think the Japanese ideology is too rigid.

DHOKF: What about your family? Did they encourage you to, say, get into gymnastics when you were in high school?

VANCLIEF: Yes. My father was in the Navy, a boxer, so he was into physical fitness!

DHOKF: How do you choreograph a fight sequence? Do you use anything like a storyboard technique?

VANCLIEF: Being a martial artist, you can really just go all out. It's fantastic. I just finished (choreographing) a film called "THE BLACK FOO DANG MASTER" for Trident Films. It stars Jim Kelly. It's done mathematically, naturally, according to how long you want the sequence, how many people you want to use and whether or not you use weapons. Take the sequence we just filmed for example. I takes place in Viet Nam and the hero is attacked by six men. What happens is that the hero comes upon them while the weapons are still stacked up. This gives him a chance to do a thing with bayonettes and knives. It's pretty easy to set up if you know the techniques: If you have maybe a five or six foot distance, you can use leg technique. It helps a lot if the stuntmen know martial arts so they'll know how to react and react FAST! Like a face kick... I mean, people really get kicked sometimes! This Hong Kong flick I did, Jason Piao kicked two people, one in the mouth and one in the temple. They were out cold for about half an hour. He almost kicked me! We were doing a fight scene, right. He said "after you throw the punch, I want you to come directly in." I threw the punch, I started in and his foot comes up like this (he motions at his throat). I thought "Are you kidding?" He likes realism... WOP! People will think that's great acting, but you're really knocked out!

DHOKF: In these films, it looks as though the choreography is pulled quite close...

VANCLIEF: It isn't necessary. If you shoot from behind the guy throwing the punch, the audience can't really tell how close it comes. It's harder with the side shots!

DHOKF: What about choreographing weapons? What special problems do you have there?

VANCLIEF: Sometimes they make up a copy of the regular weapon out of rubber, clay or any soft material. Maybe it will have a foam polyester handle. The weapons you see here are the real thing. I did an exhibition while in the Philippines I cut three carrots off of three students throats with a sword.

DHOKF: You like working with kids, don't you?

VANCLIEF: Yes!

DHOKF: What do you tell a kid when he comes to you and says "I want to be just like you, man! What should I do?"

VANCLIEF: I don't know what to say about that. I wouldn't say that happens very much. But I would tell him to train properly, not only to develop physically, but mentally and spiritually as well.

DHOKF: What if it was a student who was already capable, maybe had some gymnastics training and he wanted to get into stunt work?

VANCLIEF: It would be much easier for him. Once a person has trained he has the natural ability and, of course, the skills are transferable.

DHOKF: How would he go about getting work as a

stunt man? Would he have to join a union and pass some sort of tests?

VANCLIEF: There are three organizations— the East Coast Stuntmen's Association, the West Coast Stuntmen's Association and a new organization, the Black Stuntmen's Association.

DHOKF: How would a person get into one of these groups?

VANCLIEF: I joined the East Coast Stuntmen's Association in 1971. I was sponsored by Harry Mattson. You have to be sponsored by a member and there is a fee. Also, you have to have experience. When I joined it was to get jobs as a martial arts choreographer, having sixteen years of experience in the field and experience in theatre. I had done a few things with the Negro Ensemble. We did a show called "The Tiger and the Dragon," which was a half hour martial arts film, only done on stage! The only other requirement is that you belong to SAG or Equity.



KIA!

HOW IT BEGAN

By Roberto Fuentes & Piers Anthony

Piers put his arm around Roberto's neck and slowly applied pressure. Roberto's breathing became harsh and his eyes bulged as the blood was cut off. It was the *hadaka jime*, or naked strangle. Then Roberto applied a crushing *ude gatame* armlock, a submission hold that can readily dislocate an elbow, making Piers yelp with pain...

It all started almost five years ago with an irate post card.

Things often get violent in science fiction fandom, where professionals and amateurs spar in a perpetual free-for-all. Novelist Piers Anthony had skirmishes with several fanzines, which are small-circulation amateur magazines published for personal satisfaction. One of these printed a letter by a critical reader, Roberto Fuentes: Piers Anthony is not my favorite author...

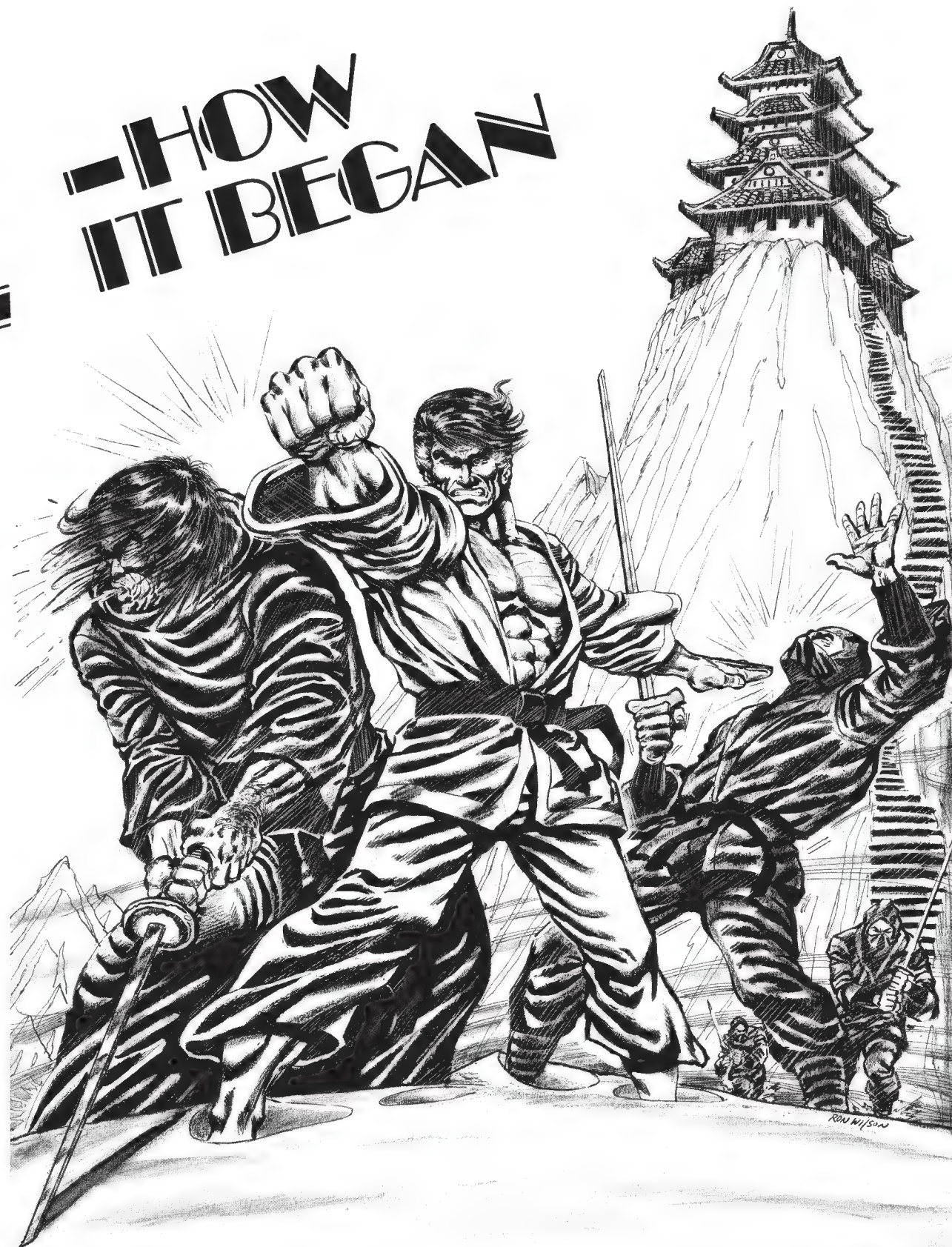
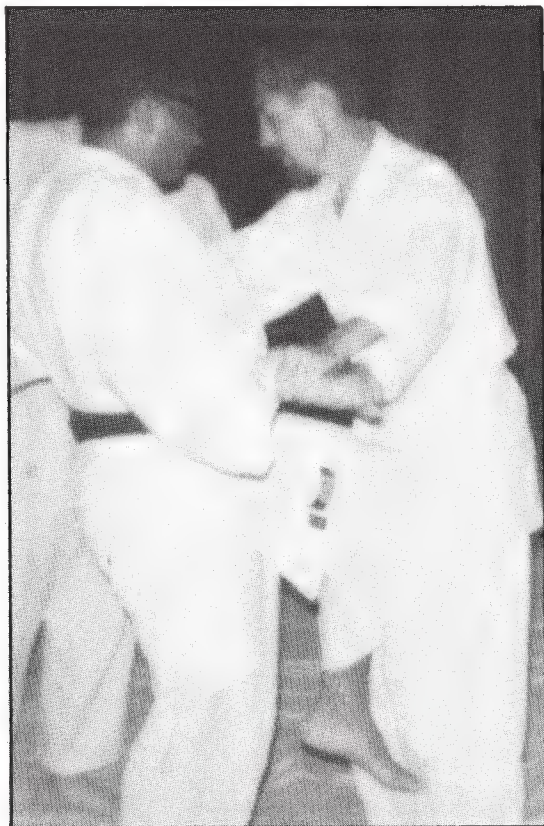
Fighting words! But Piers, adept in his fashion at the principle of *ju*, or yielding to gain an advantage, sent Roberto a card: "Are you Spanish? I used to live in Spain..."

No, Roberto was Cuban. And soon the two collaborated on a science fiction novel, *Dead Morn*, created around the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. It was a major work, that should have made both authors famous.

That was in 1970—and the novel remains on the market. Perhaps its 115,000 word length scares off publishers. Or the graphic sex and violence. Or the authentic detail exposing the manner Fidel Castro came to power. Or the new thinking in time travel. One publisher has taken a year considering the manuscript, and has not yet made a report. The editor says he is still reading it. Another publisher was interested—but then fired 200 employees and returned the novel. Publishing, actually, can be considered as a form of martial art; writers have to be tough.

In 1971 Roberto brought his wife Graciela and seven year old son Roberto to visit Piers in Florida. Piers lives

Authors and Judokas Roberto Fuentes and Piers Anthony in action at the Gulfport Judo club in Florida during one of their yearly get-togethers.





Roberto at the New Jersey AAU State Judo Championship in 1974 (on top here, natch). He fought in three matches with a broken collar bone, walking away with the Second place Championship.

in an old Spanish-style house with his wife Cam and daughters Penny and Chery. Roberto took Piers to see a judo class in Tampa. Roberto was 2 Dan, a second degree black belt in judo; Piers had never seen judo in action. The instructor was Ed Maley, 5 Dan.

Piers sat and watched—and started writing a story, “Kiai!” It featured a 5 Dan judo instructor who looked a bit like Ed Maley, but was called Caesar Kane: Kane as in Kano, the founder of judo. Roberto provided the judo action for the story, and the team was launched in a new field: martial arts fiction.

“Kiai!” never sold. The world was not ready for competent martial arts fiction. Undaunted, we built it into a novel, *Kiai!*, incorporating a notion that intrigued us both: competition between different martial arts, to discover once and for all which was best. Naturally judo came out on top—but we feel this is more than empty vanity, for judo incorporates the strikes of karate and armlocks of aikido, making it the broadest barehand martial art in the world. We believe that judo should win such a tournament.

Half a dozen publishers rejected the novel. Oh, it was well enough done—but they said there was no reader interest in martial arts. Who cared about judo or karate—and who had even heard of kung fu or Thai kick-boxing? Forget it!

Then *Kung Fu* appeared on TV, a well-done martial art series—and suddenly publishers were scrambling for martial art. *Kiai!* was snapped up, and other publishers put their hack stables to work turning out kung fu imitations. Our hero’s name had to be changed to Jason Striker; after all, who would believe we had “Kane” before *Kung Fu* had “Caine”? But a typical editorial foulup allowed a couple of references to Kane slip through to confuse readers.

Roberto started as the judoka, Piers the author. But this collaboration changed the lives of both. Roberto is becoming an author, doing reviews and articles for JUDO TIMES and collaborating with magazine editor Steranko on an *atemi* article and martial arts poster.

Piers has taken up judo, making his yellow belt and having his first competition match at age 40. It was against a 14 year old boy, another yellow belt, and yes, Piers lost: *waza ari*, a half point decision.

Who can say that the time will not come when Roberto is an individual novelist and Piers a black belt? We all have to start somewhere. At any rate, it was in this fashion that the two came to the friendly practice described in our opening scene. Roberto was showing Piers how to apply strangles and armlocks, and also what they felt like. That knowledge would in due course be translated into a scene in another book.

We are not unduly modest. We’ll stack our collaborative fiction up against anything else in the genre. In fact, much of the competition does not seem to be written with much literary or martial authority. You can’t simply read a book on kung fu or karate, go to a few practice sessions, and be an instant black belt! We are prepared to defend that statement against the challenge of any rival authors either on the judo mat or in the literary arena. Roberto is the former black belt champion of Cuba, who retired undefeated. He was for many years a teacher of judo with his own dojo, and is the present Metropolitan Masters champion. He recently made 3 Dan, third degree black belt or San Dan, as a competitor. Piers, a former English teacher, has sold 16 science fiction and fantasy novels, several of which have been in contention for best-of-year awards. His major novel *Macroscopic* will have its sixth printing in 1975.

Our four collaborative martial arts novels, *Kiai!*, *Mistress of Death*, *The Bamboo Bloodbath* and *Ninja* (the one-word titles are ours; the others are the publisher’s, so don’t blame us) exploit our respective skills. We have also had one fantasy/martial art story published, “Ki,” and are working on a factual history of judo. We do a great deal of research, so as to make our work authentic, and try to avoid formula plotting and stereotyped characterization.

But we are limited. Most editors have little notion of the meaning of martial arts. To them, it is just a current

fad, a way to sell a few more books. We have to compromise with this attitude, or we will not be published. We were turned down by one publisher for not having an oriental hero. So there is some junk in *Kiai!*, and more in the sequels. Still, we felt that some of the other books in the genre are fantastic and unreal. Some are entertaining and decently written; some aren’t. But the fact is, even the greatest fighter in the world can not go barehanded against five men armed with guns and come out alive. Even one armed novice is dangerous, and as for machine guns in the open—frankly our martial artist would be cut to pieces. We do have group fights and gun scenes, but we have tried for some credulity. A couple of our characters have gone up against impossible odds—and died in the process. Jason Striker is extremely wary of guns and other weapons, though it makes him seem like a coward at times.

We have incorporated as much genuine martial art as we could. We made our protagonist into a real man in today’s world. He’s 5 Dan in judo, 3 Dan in karate, with

training in kung fu (actually that’s a misnomer for the entire complex of Chinese physical exercise; it would make as much sense to talk about a black belt in American PhysEd) and aikido. This is not extreme; there are a number of 5 Dan judokas in America, such as our model, Ed Maley, and any one of them could match Jason Striker in competition, if they were not too old. Many martial artists study several systems, and hold black belts in each. In one novel Striker has a friendly match with a lame Cuban judoka—and loses. That judoka, Luis Guardia, is real. So Striker is not superhuman. He fights well, but he gets tired, and he makes mistakes.

Sometimes Striker “runs the line”—contesting with every student in the class, one after the other. This can be devilishly difficult, because the instructor has no respite, while every student is fresh and eager to pull an upset victory. This is drawn from experience: Roberto visited the Gulfport, Florida Judo Club and ran the line. One of the eager students he casually threw was Piers. Fortunately, Roberto made it through in good form: dead tired but victorious in every match. It *can* be done, even by a man of forty. Other episodes in the series are also drawn from real life, such as accidentally strangling a too-ambitious student into unconsciousness, or getting an arm broken in competition. Roberto’s arm never has mended completely.

Striker is also uncertain in love. More than one woman has found him a bit naive, even stuffy. One kicked him in the crotch, putting him in the hospital. He encounters all kinds: white, yellow, black, Indian, slender, voluptuous, mild, murderous. Sometimes it is romance, sometimes combat, or both at once. Yet here too there is reality; for most of the women are drawn from life, as are the love scenes. Roberto had a varied education before settling down to marriage.

Many of the characters, while functional, are representations of real people. There is an American boxer modeled after Mohammed Ali, who we feel was wronged by the political deprivation of his world boxing title some years back; a karateka like Mas Oyama, and aikidoist like Morihei Uyeshiba. Striker’s arch-enemy Kan-Sen in real life is Mockansen, no villain but a Cuban/Chinese master of Kung Fu who instructed Roberto more than twenty years ago, before that mode became popular here. The Names of some real people, like Diago, are used with fictional identities. The leading fictional character, Fu Antos, lord of the ninjas, derives from the authors’ names: FUenteS and ANThOny.

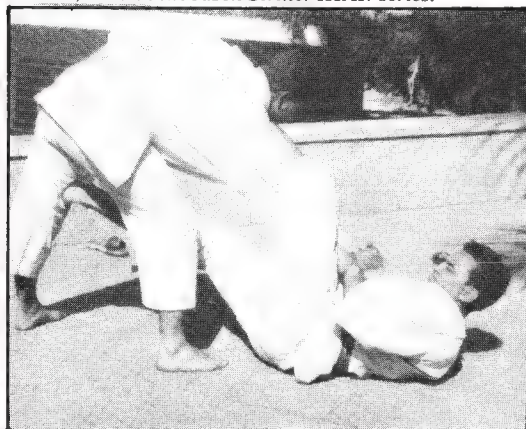
The locales, too are authentic. When Striker goes to Havana, the city is described as though by someone who lived there—as Roberto did. He also lived in others we use: Managua, Nicaragua; Miami, Florida; even New York City, in many ways the strangest of all. When Striker is in the jungle or Everglades, one of us has been there before him, and we have supplemented our observations by extensive research. Roberto was a Cuban exile commando in the same Central American jungles that are described in our novels. When there is a bomb, we know how to build it, for Roberto was active in the anti-Castro underground as an urban terrorist and guerrilla, and he did make bombs and set them off.

But more important, we try to put something in our books that is worth having. Judo is more than a system of combat; it is a philosophy, even a way of life. Striker is hardly the perfect judoka; there is blood on his hands, thanks to the demands of the genre. But he believes in



Fuentes executes a neat O-Soto-Gari, a leg reaping movement.

Fuentes demonstrates a particularly favorite lock. This is the same lock that the Russian player uses to break the American, Tony's arm in *THE BAMBOO BLOOD-BATH*, third in the Jason Striker KIAI! series.



creation. Roberto reads English, Spanish and French, so that he can do more varied research. (Piers knew Spanish as a child, but forgot it.) We have assembled a martial arts library including expensive books and backfiles of rare martial arts magazines, such as the French/English JUDO KODOKAN REVIEW, and we read them.

It hasn't shown up much yet in the series—after all, there are only so many pages to a commercial novel!—but both authors are in their separate fashions health nuts. Piers is a vegetarian who uses massive doses of vitamin C to abate colds. It works, though he spends about \$100 a year on C. He stays clear of sugar and refined foods, preferring breakfasts of rolled oats with milk, spiked with wheat germ and nutritive yeast, and lunches of raisins, nuts and cheese, plus salads from his own garden. He has cleaned the debris from his neighborhood to make compost for the garden; the neighbors are trained to dump their brush on his lot. Even complete trees. There will soon be a natural foods and cheese connoisseur in the series.

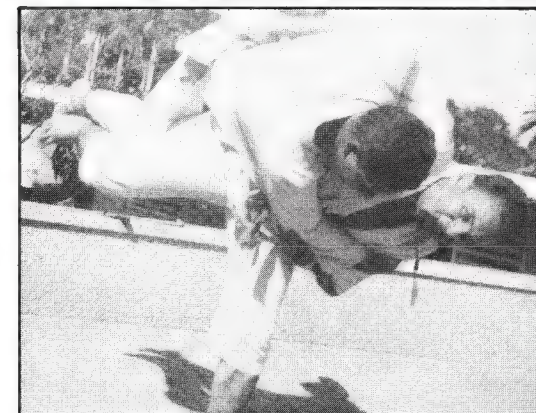
Roberto is a sun worshipper, frustrated by New Jersey climate. He has his poor wife cooking odd stuff like hearts, brains and kidneys all the time.

Neither author smokes, both are extremely moderate

drinkers, and both go for high-protein, high vitamin and mineral diets. Both believe in exercise, much of which is provided by judo. It is hardly surprising that Jason Striker has similar attitudes.

Despite all this agreement, at times we work at cross purposes. Roberto prefers big, hefty, hourglass-shaped women like the Cuban girl Dulce, while Piers tries to slim them down to more petite dimensions. Generally we compromise by including both types. Sometimes things get fouled up in the course of negotiations, and we find ourselves in print with a Chinese girl with a Japanese name, such as Striker's fiancée Chiyako. Alas, we were paying more attention to the size of her bust than to her locale. We'll have to make a rationale for that error in a later novel.

In our actual writing, we discuss notions first in a general way, then hammer out a plot to carry the elements we want to include. There is always much more than we can use; both of us have fertile imaginations, and the problem is always to cut it down to manageable size. Sometimes we just split the idea into smaller segments; that's how *Ninja* spread into four ninja novels now being written. Generally Roberto dictates the story line; just about the whole of *Mistress of Death* was his notion—except for the moderate bosom of Chiyako, and the detail of what happened to that bosom in a broken-bottle fight.



Here, Fuentes shows off some Harai-Goshi, a hip movement also involving "reaping" your opponent. You then fall on your opponent, "finishing" him with a knee-blow or an arm-lock.

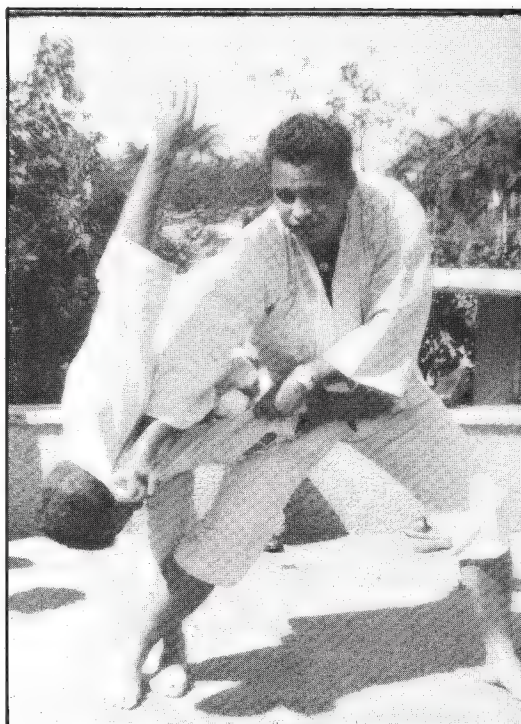
the ideals of judo, and tries to practice them, and when he falls short he suffers. In that aspiration and failure we try to show what judo is and should be.

We tackle significant issues. We analyze the drug problem as it applies to martial arts, not as a plotting device (Superman come quick! There's a shipload of heroin docking in Miami!) but to show the harm drugs do, and what contemporary efforts are being made to rehabilitate addicts. No, we haven't been hooked on drugs in real life—but we have known those who were. Piers actually walked into a juvenile drug rehabilitation center, telling them frankly why he wanted information: that he was doing a book with an addict character, and that one recommended treatment for his own hyperactive daughter was to put her on speed. So he had both professional and personal motive to learn about drugs. The interview in which they refused to cooperate appears in *The Bamboo Bloodbath*, except that Striker does, after all, get in. We don't think much of outfits that preach love but operate in secrecy. Abuse is too easy—not only of drugs, but of human civil rights.

We tackle racism: our criminal/heroine is a black karateka, raped by white men, with vengeance in her soul yet justice in her motive. While we can't claim to know what it is to be black, one of us has mixed ancestry and both of us are immigrants from foreign countries. One of us was raised in a society remarkably free from prejudice, especially in boy-girl relations; the other resides in the South. It does provide a hint.

We tackle pollution, as our ninja sets out to rid the world of it. And history, with actual events adapted to our purpose.

In short, under the veneer of physical and emotional violence and sex, we have a serious philosophy of



This movement is called Tai-Otoshi, a special arm movement, also widely used in the books.



A friend (?) strangles Roberto with a Okuri-Eri-Jime hold.

This preparation is slow by mail, and sometimes dangerous. We once lost two weeks work via the mails. (Fortunately there was a carbon. ALWAYS KEEP A CARBON COPY!) Since we meet every year or so, we enter into hours-long dialogue a bit like judo *randori*, or free practice: bouncing ideas off each other, fitting them together, amplifying, integrating characters with action. In a few hours we can thrash out what might take months by letter. In August 1974, sitting on the beach (Roberto edging toward the sun, Piers toward the shade), we worked out four novels and the judo history book—one day apiece. Of course, much remained to be done—but the framework was set, so that we knew where we were going, and were assured that there would be no major snags. Not at our end, anyway; we are never assured that publishers will take a given novel.

Roberto then goes to work on research, summarizing



Piers Anthony poses with his two daughters along side Roberto FUentes and his son Robertico.

relevant material and mailing it to Florida. Often he sends whole books. Piers then does a first draft in pencil, integrating research notes, outline, and theme in a readable narrative. This is his special skill as a writer; lots of people have ideas and information, but few can translate these into readable prose. When he has a chapter or so, he types it in second draft, with parenthetical remarks set off by brackets. These brackets can be one word [yes?] or several hundred, and they can trigger off pages of discussion by Roberto. [Hey, I'm stuck for a good illustrative example here. Any ideas?]

"About the example: Do not forget mentioning my commando days in Nicaragua. I lived in Managua for 6

months. Amalita, the girl in the first two novels, was alive and well in Managua, at least up till the earthquake. She and I used to go to her house and—"

[Roberto, I can't put *that* in print; they'd have to censor it out. Anyway, I've already typed past that place in this piece.]

"Well, what about the time I was in jail, Cabanas Fortress in Cuba, *paredon* the death wall, etc.—we could tie that into the Brazilian prison scene we are working on. But we'll have to explain about political prison, so the readers don't think I was a criminal."

And so it goes. When Piers hits a snag, he brackets it for Roberto to sweat and goes on. No doubt these letter/manuscripts will make fascinating reading for scholars at Syracuse University library, where Pier's papers are eventually collected. Perhaps in the twenty-second century A.D., when books are no longer written and the science of writing has become a lost art. This article was done the same way, so represents a capsule case-history of our system.

Roberto goes over the manuscript and remarks on both the brackets and any other points that strike him. The result is a letter of comment about the same length as the manuscript itself. Pier plugs in all these corrections—a slow, tedious job, more like piecing together broken pottery than creating—then types the submission manuscript. After that the changes stop, for the publisher's deadline is upon us and the book must get there immediately.

Unfortunately, some errors slip through. For example, in *Mistress of Death* Roberto typed "crowd" as "crow." Piers didn't question it; he thought it was a nice touch. Thus we have crows clustering around the shops in Chinatown. May the Chinese Americans forgive us!

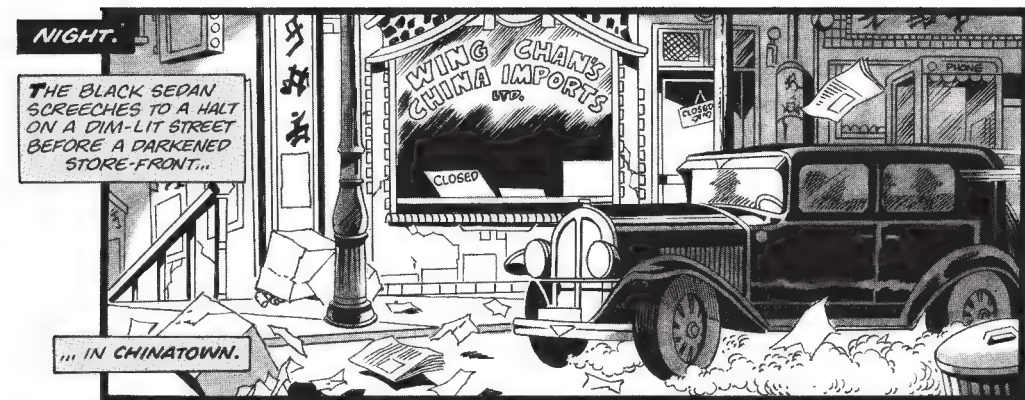
The truth is that collaboration is hard work. Each of us puts about as much effort into a book as he would writing the whole thing alone, yet each gets only half the money. And the result is necessarily a compromise between our viewpoints. But we don't argue much, not even about bosoms. It will be a long time, if ever, before Piers can tell a judo black belt how to perform a given technique, and perhaps as long before Roberto educates any English teacher on the nuances of the subjective mood. In the vast majority of cases we see eye to eye. And why not? We are both college educated married males with a number of common interests.

Oh yes, we can be set off by outsiders. Once a bully started in on a smaller man in a post office, making ethnic slurs, and Roberto stepped in ready to fight. A version of that episode leads off our fourth novel, *Ninja*. If anyone goes after Piers' little girls, he comes, running and ugly. The girls carry a whistle, just in case. But we regard these as natural provocations; we try to get along, and the last thing we want is trouble with each other. So—we have none. Which seems to be half the secret of successful collaboration.

But why bother to collaborate at all? Because we have complementary skills, so that together we can produce material that neither could alone. We don't care enough about the money to turn out cheap work. We try to do our best, even when it is straight adventure. We like to think that readers of discretion will recognize and appreciate a superior product, even if many editors don't. In the long run we believe that will pay—but even if it doesn't in terms of money, it will in satisfaction.

As this article shows, we stand by what we do.

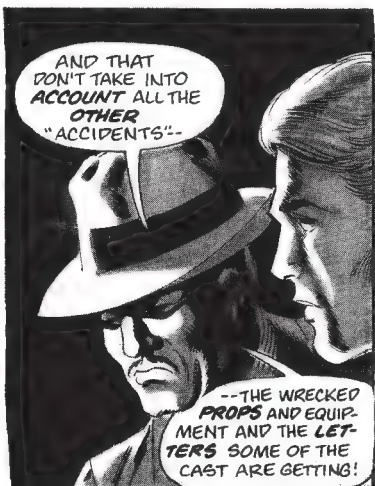
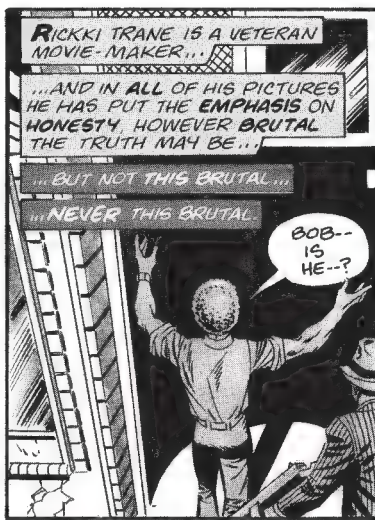
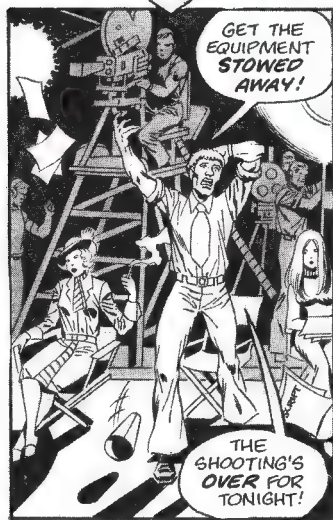
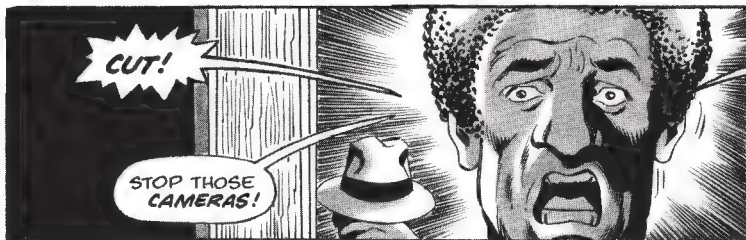




...AND THEY ARE NOT QUITE PREPARED TO HAVE THEIR ILLUSIONS STRIPPED FROM THEM SO SUMMARILY--FOR THIS IS NOT, AS WE HAVE SAID, 1925. IT IS 1975, A MOVIE SET, AND THESE MEN ARE ACTORS WHO HAVE JUST FOUND THAT THEIR SCRIPT HAS BEEN HORRIBLY RE-WRITTEN...

DEATH is my CO-STAR!

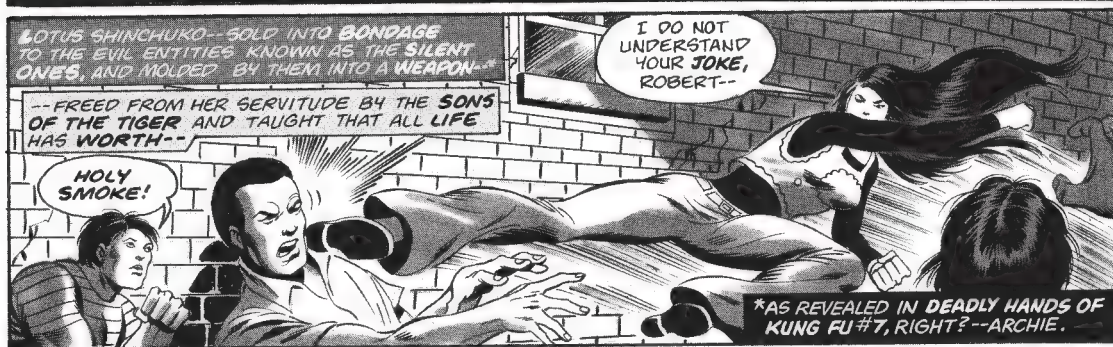
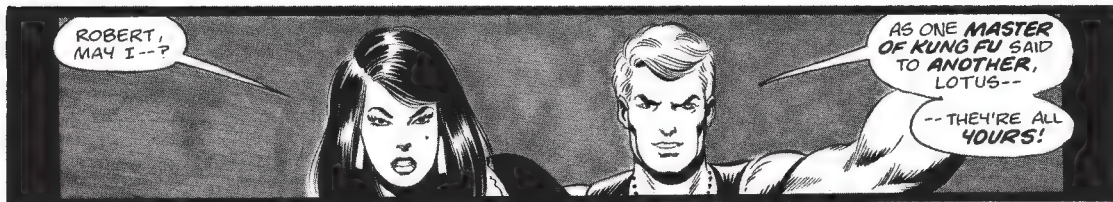


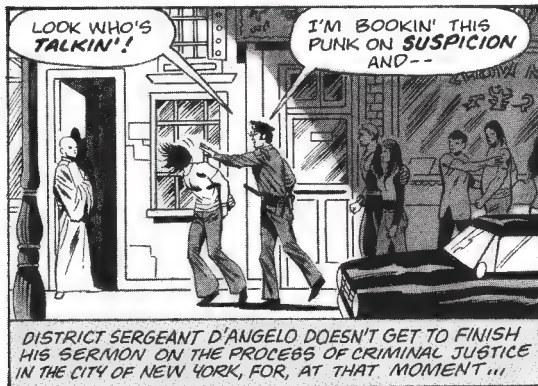














THAT-- THAT WAS THE **MOST--**

HOW'S CURTIS?

RIKKI'S CHECKING HIM OVER NOW, BOB BUT YOU --

D'ANGELO'S AT IT **AGAIN**, BOB!



WE WANTED TO **STOP** THE PICTURE, **SURE** -- BUT NOT LIKE --
--URRRKK!

SO IT WAS YOU! I KNEW IT FROM THE **START!**

YOU KIDS DOWN HERE ARE ALL **ALIKE!** NOTHIN' BUT **GARBAGE!**



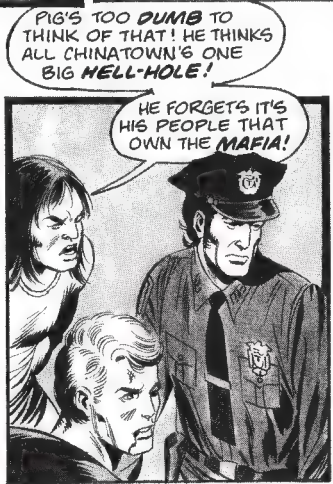
AND YOU AIN'T, PIG? **GNNHHH--**

SHUT YOUR **FILTHY--**



D'ANGELO! IF YOU DON'T LAY OFF OF HIM I'M GOING TO **FORGET** YOU'RE A **COP**, AND STICK THAT **BADGE** RIGHT DOWN YOUR **THROAT!**

USE YOUR **BRAINS**, IF YOU'VE GOT ANY! THE KID'S BEEN WITH **YOU** THE WHOLE TIME! HOW COULD HE HAVE TRIED TO **KILL** CURTIS?



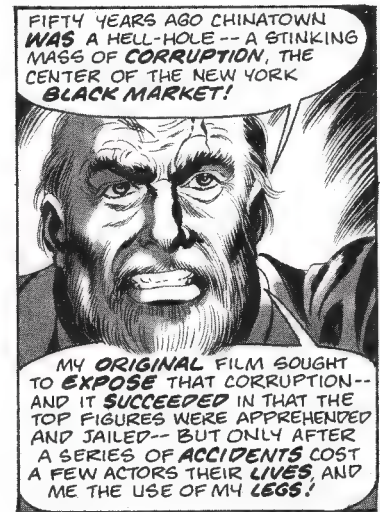
PIG'S TOO **DUMB** TO THINK OF THAT! HE THINKS ALL CHINATOWN'S ONE BIG **HELL-HOLE!**

HE FORGETS IT'S HIS PEOPLE THAT OWN THE **MAFIA!**



THE BOY'S JUST **COVERING** HIMSELF, SERGEANT --

HE KNOWS A **VERY GOOD** REASON FOR **SABOTAGING** THE **FILM!**



FIFTY YEARS AGO CHINATOWN WAS A **HELL-HOLE** -- A STINKING MASS OF **CORRUPTION**, THE CENTER OF THE NEW YORK **BLACK MARKET!**

MY **ORIGINAL** FILM SOUGHT TO **EXPOSE** THAT **CORRUPTION**-- AND IT **SUCCEEDED** IN THAT THE **TOP** FIGURES WERE APPREHENDED AND JAILED-- BUT ONLY AFTER A SERIES OF **ACCIDENTS** COST A FEW ACTORS THEIR **LIVES**, AND ME THE USE OF MY **LEGS!**



WHY DON'T YOU ASK **SAMMY KWAI** WHAT HIS **GRANDFATHER'S** NAME IS -- AND HOW LONG HE'S BEEN IN **PRISON?**

WHATSA-MATTER, PUNK? HANDCUFFS TOO **TIGHT?**

HE WAS **FRAMED** BY YOUR LOUGH **MOVIE!** ALL OF THEM WERE--**UNNGHH!**



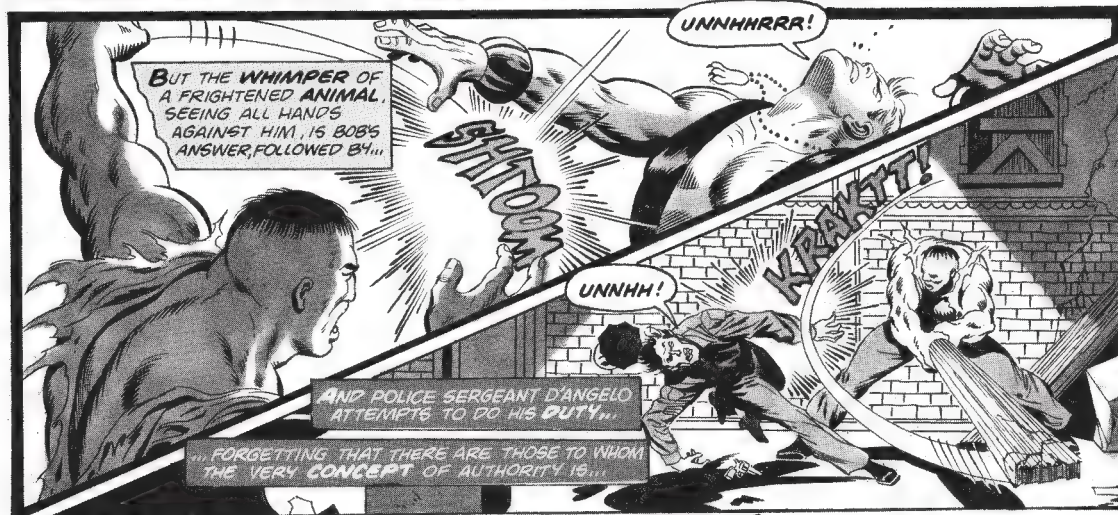
SUDDENLY...

RATATA

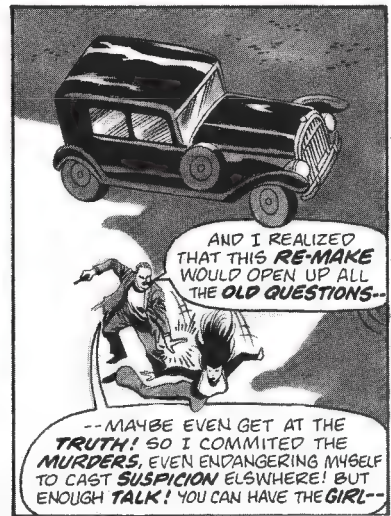
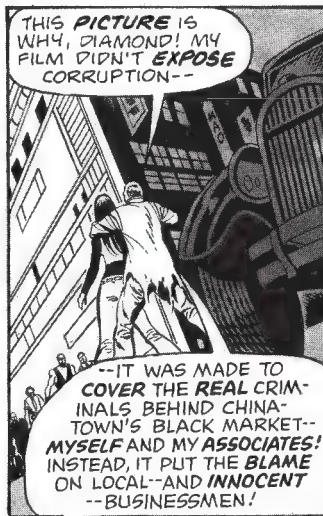
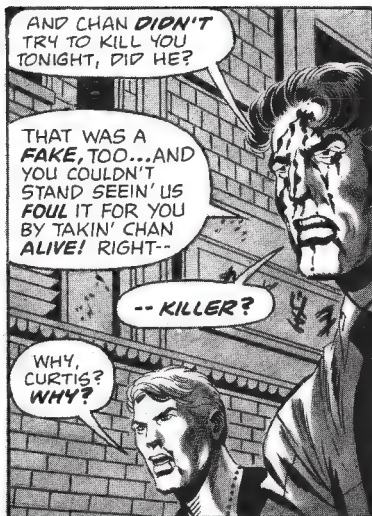
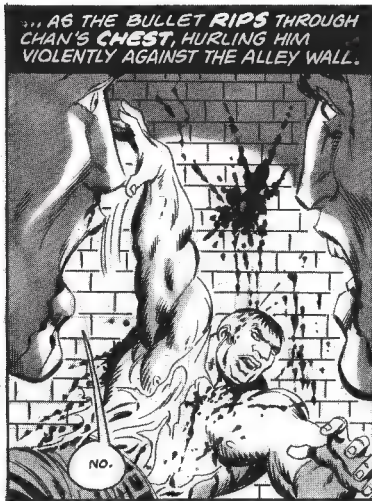
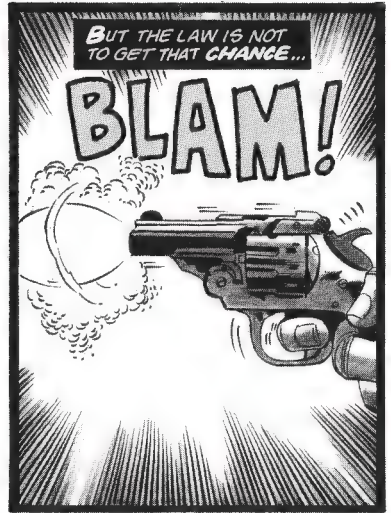
SOMEBODY'S EITHER **CELEBRATING** CHINESE NEW YEAR WITH **FIREWORKS--**

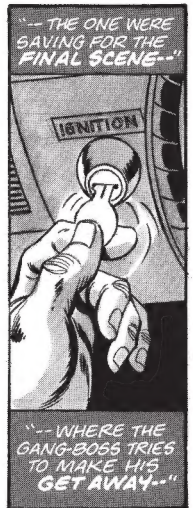
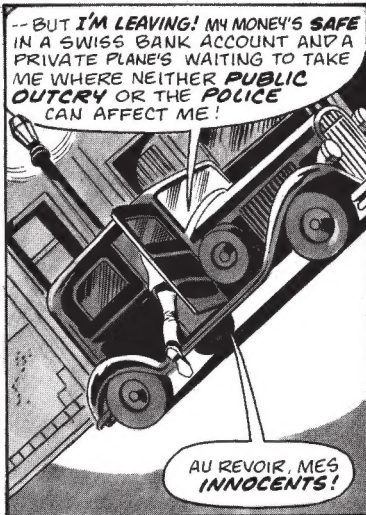
OR THAT'S A **MACHINE GUN!**











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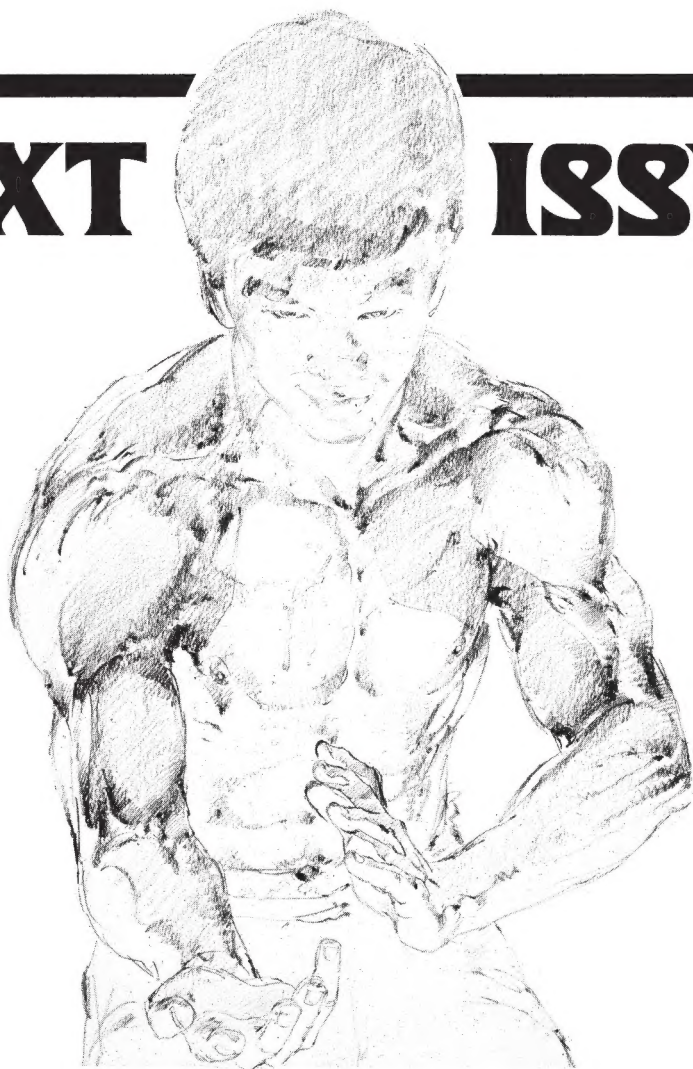
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